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ABSTRACT

This volume focuses on papers presented by grantees supported by the National Institute of Education and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education at a meeting held in September, 1980. Papers are grouped into the following sections: composing processes and development, writing assessment, writing instruction in context, the writing teacher, language variation and writing, and functions of writing outside of school. Roger Shuy's concluding remarks highlight some of the issues that mark the recent work in writing: (1) writing is seen as critically related to broad individual abilities, rather than as a set of narrow skills; (2) there is a new interest at looking at the processes involved in writing rather than just at the products or finished products: (3) there is a greater emphasis on the functions than on the forms of writing: (4) new emphasis is being given to writing as social discourse: (5) language variation and cultural context, particularly with nonstandard dialects or bilingualism, are seen as deserving more attention in writing; (6) there is a general belief that instruction puts too much emphasis on surface features like grammar and spelling, but there is no consensus about how seriously to treat errors; and (7) teaching writing is difficult, and a major problem is that many teachers of writing are not knowledgeable or experienced writers. (HOD)

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MOVING BETWEEN PRACTICE AND RESEARCH IN WRITING

Proceedings of the NIE-FIPSE Grantee Workshop

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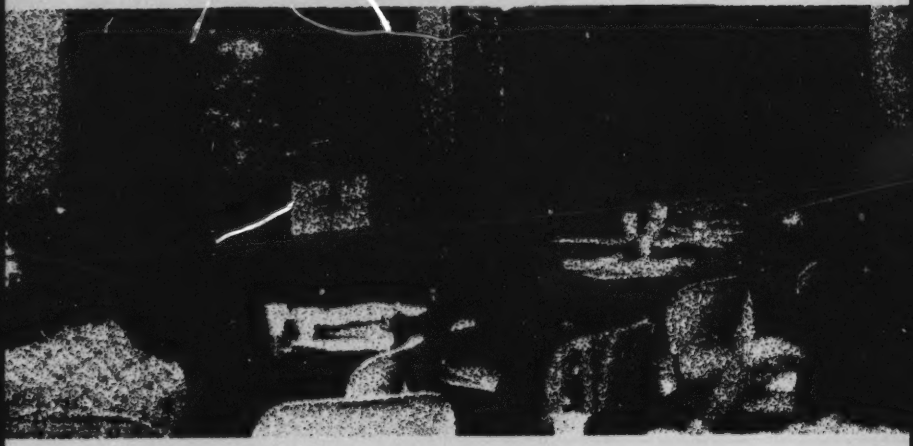
PREFACE



PREFACE

This volume is one result of an unusually vital meeting held at SWRL in September, 1980, that brought together grantees supported by two federal agencies--The National Institute of Education and The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. The individuals involved represent some of the best new research and practice in writing. Their work should interest many others. The nature of the subject of writing and its relative freshness tended to open up questions rather than to settle them.

In recent years, many have complained of a crisis in literacy, especially in writing, which had sometimes been called obsolete. The press, educators, students, parents, and employers now share a concern for more effective written communication. Elementary and secondary schools again give great attention to literacy (although many of the participants in this meeting believe that the "back to basics" movement is hindering rather than helping the development of the ability to write well). Writing is receiving growing emphasis in college and even graduate education, and there is more job-related writing than is usually recognized.

Writing instruction is obviously long established, and some of the concepts drawn on here derive from Aristotle. But renewed efforts to understand and improve writing have only had significant support for a few years. Much of the new work is inspired by the teaching and research of Mina Shaughnessy in this country; this effort runs parallel to James Britton's work in England. The search for a new understanding of literacy was given impetus by early-opportunity programs for disadvantaged children and by open-admissions policies in higher education. Literacy education is a central part of the concern for equal eductional opportunity, and the new work on writing is by now seen as relevant to learners with all kinds of backgrounds and abilities.

In many ways this meeting represented an important subject still in its infancy, a status that can be fortunate; writing cuts across academic fields and their methodologies, and the various disciplines involved were more noted for their contributions than for their prior claims. Likewise, presenters spoke from a range of observation, including pre-school children, elementary and secondary pupils, college students, and adults on the job. In all cases, work presented is in progress, and presumably both understanding and practice will change before all the results are in.

Roger Shuy's excellent summary draws out many of the common concerns and uncertainties. What can be highlighted here are some of the issues that mark the recent work in writing as a new beginning. Some of these ideas may finally be incompatible--and the meeting enjoyed plenty of controversy--but at present they are still seen as dimensions of the same subject.

- Writing is seen as critically related to broad individual abilities, rather than as a set of narrow skills. During the meeting, concepts like "meaning making" surfaced, and participants spoke of "writing to learn" as well as learning to write. Thus there was significant interest in the development of writing ability and its relation to human change, to attitudes, and to critical thinking. Writing development was usually seen as "natural" (complex and recursive) rather than "conventional" (gradual mastery of standard forms).

- Similarly, there is a new interest in looking at the processes (such as planning and revising) involved in writing rather than just at the products or finished works. This focus was important both for finding better instructional

strategies and as a backdrop to the problematic question of assessment, which is intimately involved with writing in school settings. Most participants agreed that existing standardized tests, including most "holistic scoring" procedures, are not adequate measures of writing ability.

- There is a greater emphasis on the functions than on the forms of writing. Understanding different, even contradictory, purposes was seen as a key goal of instruction, and writing should be evaluated in keeping with varying purposes.

- New emphasis is being given to writing as social discourse, and this stress sometimes goes in directions that are different from those of the developmental or process concerns. There was considerable reference to the contexts of writing, including at least purpose and audience. Instructional strategies involving tutors and other immediate audiences were proposed. The topic of non-school writing provoked great interest both as an arena for research and improvement and as a corrective to more isolated and artificial academic writing.

- Language variation and cultural context, particularly with nonstandard dialects or bilingualism, are seen as deserving more attention in writing. The definition of dialect influence in writing has been broadened; rather than only referring to surface features, it includes aspects like narrative structure. But using broad concepts to characterize minority communities (such as field dependence/

independence or cognitive style) was treated skeptically. Standard written English continues to be accepted as necessary for school and work success.

- There is a general belief that instruction puts too much emphasis on surface features like grammar and spelling, but there is no consensus about how seriously to treat errors. Most participants felt that standard written English had to be learned, at least for pragmatic reasons, and a few projects reported intellectual growth as errors are mastered.

- Teaching writing is difficult, and a major problem is that many teachers of writing are not knowledgeable or experienced writers. Changes in responsibility for writing instruction as well as low status and rewards within English departments in schools and colleges were parts of the setting for improvement projects. Experiments with "writing across the curriculum," with writing-development programs for teachers, and with using tutors and laboratories are possible solutions.

These issues and others emerged partly as a result of the wide basis on which the workshop was formed. It was a meeting about writing, rather than about any one kind of writing (e.g., informal, remedial, creative, workplace, expository, public, personal, children's, etc.). Obviously such topics could be explored more intensely, but the broad framework proved relevant and sometimes liberating.

One major premise for the meeting, the desirability of interchange between researchers and practitioners, was easily affirmed. In this new work on writing, no major gap exists between research and

practice. Almost all the participants have been involved in teaching writing, and most of the research is being carried out from a base in practice. There are opportunities for teachers to do research that seem closed in other fields. This fortunate condition is part of the reason for our excitement about the implications of the work represented here, and we encourage readers to contact the participants for further information.

Richard Hendrix
Fund for the Improvement of
Postsecondary Education

Marcia Farr Whiteman
National Institute of
Education

INTRODUCTIONS

WELCOME FROM MARCIA FARR WHITEMAN
National Institute of Education

I want to welcome you on behalf of NIE and on behalf of Michael Timpane, who is the Director of NIE, and Lois-ellin Datta, who is Associate Director of the Teaching and Learning division.

NIE was authorized by Congress in 1972 to support research and development to improve education in the United States. NIE's part, then, in the larger picture of federal interest in and support of writing, is to provide support for research and development. In an attempt to create a basic knowledge base, we have focused our efforts on research rather than development. Since 1978, we have called for work and funded over 30 basic research projects; these projects are in addition to the work we have done cooperatively with regional laboratories like SWRL, which are working to move research into practice.

There are three major program areas within NIE; our work on writing resides within the Teaching and Learning Program, and almost entirely within the Reading and Language Studies Division of the Teaching and Learning Program. Reading and Language Studies, in turn, consists of three teams: a Reading Team, a Writing Team, and a Bilingualism/Bilingual Education Team. I head the Writing Team, and one of our primary functions is planning needed research on writing. Planning is an ongoing process, and it involves learning constantly, formulating ideas for research, and integrating new information into the previously formulated research agenda.

One of the first things I did when we began the formal planning process last year was to attempt to investigate the state of practice. As it turned out, there is not much systematic information on the state of current instruction. For elementary school writing

instruction, we do have Donald Graves' 1978 Report to the Ford Foundation, which claims that there is not much writing going on in school. Clearly, we can't expect children to learn to write if they don't get much actual practice in school. We now also have Arthur Applebee's final report from an NIE grant, which examined secondary-school writing instruction; he will be talking about this work at this workshop. Many of you here will probably have much to say about the state of writing at the post-secondary level, and I look forward to gathering information from you.

The sparse information on current writing instruction suggests that most teachers are not having their students do much actual writing. Why should this be so? One answer may be that most teachers are not prepared to teach writing. Rather than relying on college courses on the teaching of writing (like those on the teaching of reading, or the teaching of literature), teachers must rely on lore--they probably teach writing as it was taught to them. With an adequate knowledge base, we can create courses in the teaching and learning of writing. The teaching of writing, then, will be informed by solid knowledge rather than by the haphazard trying out of various methods with equally various student populations in various contexts. Hopefully, all the NIE projects will combine to produce a background of solid research knowledge that can be used to create such teacher preparation courses.

If we compare writing research as a field, an emerging field, with a field like reading research, we see some striking differences. Reading research is 50 to 100 years older than similar writing research. Other kinds of writing research go back centuries--back to Aristotle. The humanists have been writing about writing for a very long time, and there is quite an accumulation of intuitive knowledge of text that has contributed much to current writing instruction.

What is happening now is that people are beginning to ask questions that have not been answered through the centuries of intuitive exploration of writing. How do people learn to write? What composing processes go on cognitively as they write? How to children differ from adults in such learning and composing? What are the functions of writing in non-school contexts? What are the differences between oral and written language? And how can we best facilitate the learning of writing in school?

One of the interesting things about this emerging field of writing research is that it is not yet intensely political. It is not yet dominated by any one rigid methodology: We are devising our own tools, choosing from among a variety of social-science disciplines and approaches as we go along. We must create structure out of what we find--out of the data. This condition makes writing research very challenging. I do think sometimes that people often use the term "research" too narrowly in an attempt to be "scientific"--to be as unassailable as physics and biology. We often try to hide the fact that writing is a human activity; as such, what we really need to do in order to get valid information is pick our way along and eclectically use methodology from here and there, selecting techniques to help us learn what we want to know. Being eclectic, of course, does <u>not</u> preclude being rigorous in our thinking; it simply allows us to stay close to the real world in our work.

This is the first time to my knowledge that NIE and FIPSE have created an inter-agency workshop. I am very pleased that we have pulled this off because I think it is extremely important for researchers and practitioners to inform each other. Often researchers get too far from the social contexts in which their work could be useful, and their work becomes so esoteric that it requires much further work to "translate" the findings into practice. It is also important for those who teach writing every day to participate in formulating the research questions; this participation will also keep the research close

to the social contexts in which it can be used. To make our first attempt at inter-agency cooperation successful, I hope that the people here will talk the issues through and make suggestions to each other. In these two days, we can begin to determine what kind of research needs to be done, and also what research already has to say to improve practice.

WELCOME FROM RICHARD HENDRIX
Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education

I want to welcome you, too. There are many FIPSE people who know about this workshop and who are excited about it, including our new director, Arturo Madrid. He sees the work that some of you are doing as having very high priority.

I want to say a few words about the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education and about how we came into working on writing. I also want to say something about how we came to the inter-agency experience that we are trying out here.

The Fund became an entity at the same time that NIE did in the early 1970's as a result of federal legislation with a very broad mandate. We deal fundamentally with post-secondary education. We chose to have a wide definition of the work we wanted to do, and that is part of what brought us into writing. There is nothing in the legislation and nothing in a formal structure that mentioned writing or language or literacy. Rather, writing became an exciting problem for the agency when it began the process of sorting out priorities and setting up grants programs that allowed important work to come forward.

Work in writing really began to appear across the desks of people like me only about three or four years ago. That coincides with the time of that first NIE conference on writing that SWRL sponsored. I think the study of writing is an interesting development, and I am sure any historian would say that this work is still in its infancy.

The work on writing, as I personally see it, relates to the more broadly drawn work that we have done in liberal education and in the reform of liberal education. It is significant that many of the people

here don't conceive of writing as a tightly defined skill, but as a writing ability or writing capacity, and as a matter of taking control of one's life and liberation, as in the opening of Peter Elbow's book, Writing without Teachers. Further, some of the reform in education that we are and have been interested in was very ambitious about the role of learners as citizens and participants in society, and writing seemed to be a key entry point.

I want to end by emphasizing the significance of this as an inter-agency activity. One of the purposes of the meeting is the education of the people here, and I'm sure that will happen even if nothing else happens. But in terms of what kind of policies get recommended, what kind of program guidelines get written, what kinds of projects get funded, this meeting provides an opportunity for things to happen. You and we want this to be a serious and interesting challenge for agencies that are situated differently and sometimes have competing or conflicting ideas. For example, it is not just a question of good research informing practice, but of good practice informing research.

Writing to both me and Marcia has seemed to be a place where the lines and categories between research and practice are not so rigid, where researchers are often teachers and teachers are often researchers, so that an interesting inter-agency dialogue is possible. The notion we have of this workshop is that those of you who see yourself as researchers might very well try to work toward implications for practice or applications of the research and, conversely, those of you who come here as practitioners might very well be talking about research agendas or research questions that have come up during the course of your work. And this is why the workshop is entitled "Moving between Practice and Research in Writing."

WELCOME FROM RICHARD SCHUTZ
SWRL Educational Research and Development

As a regional educational laboratory, SWRL operates as a public agency dedicated to converting research into a usable form for teachers, students, and schools, consistent with regional needs. There is no question that the school people in this region regard writing as a high priority. That concern is not unique to this region because writing is a problem in all of the regions represented by the participants meeting here today.

This is an unusual meeting because it is very seldom that researchers get together to talk about research while the research is in progress. It is even more unusual to get together to talk about your research with an eye to putting it into practice. This workshop is certainly in the interest of NIE, FIPSE, and SWRL. If you desire to see your research put into practice, it is going to take this type of meeting. Otherwise, the probability that a given research study will see direct use is low.

Furthermore, we at SWRL find this kind of meeting very exciting because it provides us an opportunity for learning, and we hope that it will provide a similar opportunity for you. We also hope that this will be a part of a continuing relationship with all of you in various ways.

This is not the first meeting with NIE directly on this topic. The first NIE-sponsored Conference on Writing was held at SWRL in 1977. All indications are that although that was a highly productive meeting, this will be an even better meeting. And it will be more to the point of writing, writing research, and improving writing in the schools.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

ORAL AND LITERATE TRADITIONS—ENDLESS LINKAGES

Shirley Brice Heath
Stanford University

I think it is safe to say that up until about ten years ago, we were fairly confident with our knowledge about literacy. We were able to talk about an oral and a literate tradition--traditions that had been defined since the time of Plato. Within the past decade, however, a number of problems in educational theory and practice have caused us to reexamine where we were a decade ago.

We are all familiar with some of these current problems on a first-hand basis: the question of open admission in the community colleges; the need for more knowledge on how to teach writing; the need for our students to transfer knowledge learned in reading to a representation of that knowledge in acceptable written form. As we looked at many of our students, we found that their difficulties could not be helped by our understanding of Platonian definitions of the oral and literate traditions. Yet we knew that many of our students' problems were not purely individual; that is, their problems could not be explained simply as a lack of ability or even as a lack of exposure to writing. Rather, we suspected that our students somehow came from different cultural traditions than did those of us who had succeeded in a literate, school-oriented environment. And it didn't help us much in the classroom that we talked a great deal about cultural "differences" versus cultural "deficits." Such distinctions may have satisfied our feelings of liberalism during that era, but they were not very helpful when it came to teaching.

It was at that point that researchers began to raise a lot of questions about oral and literate traditions. We wondered, for example, if students who came from an oral tradition would necessarily be restricted in their ability to use written language,

thereby making them "non-literate" in a professionally oriented school setting. Recent work, however, has suggested that this and other questions are far more complex than we had thought. We now find vast differences within both the oral and literate traditions, and it is on these differences that I want to focus my comments.

The Oral-Literate Dichotomy

At the NIE Writing Conference in 1977, many researchers pointed out that much of the work prior to their current research had accepted a dichotomous contrast between the oral and the literate traditions. Much of this work recognized that cross-cultural differences between the spoken and written modes were a result of habits associated with these traditions. The differences were often cited as "oral versus literate," and the dichotomy was painted in strong tones: differences in attitudes (conservative versus liberal); differences in opportunities for social mobility (life chances versus life choices); and differences in the development of logical operations that lead to certain classifications of the world. However, many of the conference participants suggested that both the oral and literate traditions were broader than they had been painted in the past.

Let me briefly summarize what the literature up to that point had said about the oral tradition. The oral tradition was portrayed as generally associated with a formulaic or fixed use of language in a primary social group. Meaning was seen as highly contextualized and socially agreed upon. The narrative, often in parable-like form, was seen as a highly frequent form used in any group associated with the oral tradition. Truth was judged as related to and verified by experience. Plots of stories were seen to be schematic, and they did not follow the narrative expectations of orienting the listener by introducing major figures and actions in a progressive order. Instead, the plot schema served as a vehicle into

which formulaic phrases were inserted so that routines and fixed sayings made up much of the content of the story.

The oral tradition was emphasized as being that which could be stored in human memory. There was a direct relationship seen between symbol and referent, with particularized denotations and accepted connotations. Oral discourse was also viewed as the expression of the attitudes of a group, not of an individual.

The literate tradition, on the other hand, was framed as having a different set of universal characteristics. Some theorists even suggested that the habits of the individual, once he or she had become literate, cut off those habits associated with the oral tradition. The literate tradition was associated with formal schooling and was characterized by a recognition of meaning in written text, rather than in experience. The given form of this text was usually assumed to be the formal expository essay. The literate tradition also included the development of certain critical facilities, esthetic tastes, and particular motivations for reading and writing.

Although this earlier research had underlined the dichotomous view of the oral and literate traditions, recent work has indicated that this characterization is not accurate. Several researchers present at the 1977 NIE Conference on Writing are continuing research that suggests oral and literate traditions can be represented as two multi-faceted continua that overlap and diverge at different points and in varying degrees in various settings. What follows here is a brief report of how my own research confirms this view.

Ethnographic Study of Oral and Literate Traditions

The research reported here is part of a larger study based on ethnographic fieldwork in two communities of the Piedmont Carolinas (Heath, forthcoming:

Ways with words: Ethnography of communications, communities and classrooms). One community, Roadville, is a Southern Appalachian transitional community whose members moved from the mountains several generations ago and came to the Piedmont region to work in textile mills. Although members of the community are now living in an urban environment, they are still highly rural oriented. The other community, Trackton, is a rural-oriented Black community in the same area. Both groups find their major employment in textile mills, often supplementing their incomes with construction work and handicrafts. Neither group can be characterized as poverty-ridden; in fact, the average income in both Roadville and Trackton is higher than that of public school teachers in that region.

The research, based on ethnographic fieldwork lasting nearly ten years, sought to determine how the degree of literacy and the use of oral traditions in the two groups correlated with such factors as space usage, family methods of social control, and the links between religious and recreational institutions. Research considerations included how children learned to speak in the two communities, how adults got children's attention when they wanted to engage in a conversation, what tendencies adults exhibited toward using a running commentary when talking with young children, and how much naming of objects took place in adult-child conversations. Other questions were what practices are common in such conversations (e.g., using questions and answers, expanding children's early utterances, rephrasing, or echoing), and whether adults accept the truth value of children's utterances?

The oral traditions of Roadville and Trackton are very different. In both communities, storytelling is a popular activity, but the form, occasions, content, and functions of their stories vary greatly. Each group structures its stories differently, holding different scales of features on which forms are recognized as stories (and are judged as good or bad). In

addition, the patterns of interaction surrounding storytelling vary greatly between the two communities.

Roadville

In Roadville, stories must be invited or announced by someone other than the storyteller, and only certain community members are designated as good storytellers. In the Roadville community, the story provides an assertion of group membership and an agreement on behavioral norms. The marked behavior of the main character in the story brings the audience and storyteller together in exemplifying the weaknesses of all, illustrating the need for persistence in overcoming weaknesses.

Roadville allows only stories that are factual and contain little exaggeration. Roadville stories typically use formulaic openings and maintain a strict chronology, with dialogue reported directly. The Roadville community does not allow any explicit exposition of meaning or any direct evaluation of the behavior of the characters in the story. The narratives usually end with a summary of a moral (often stated in proverb-like form) or with a Biblical quotation. An example of an oral Roadville story is presented below:

NOTE: In the following dialogue, Sue, an adult, is a caregiver for Wendy, a five-year old. This story is being told to Wendy's mother when she comes to pick Wendy up after a day in Sue's care.

SUE: Tell yo' mama where we went today.

WENDY: Mama [Wendy's term for Sue] took me 'n Sally to the Mall. Bugs Bunny was ...

SUE: . . . no, who was that? That wasn't Bugs Bunny.

WENDY: Uh, I mean, Peter, no, uh a big Easter bunny was there, 'n we, he, mama got us some eggs.

SUE: 'n then what happened?

WENDY: (turning her head to one side) I don't 'member.

SUE: Yes, you do, what happened on the climbing?

WENDY: . . . me 'n Sally tried to climb on this thing, 'n we dropped, I dropped, my eggs, some of 'em.

SUE: Why did you drop your eggs? What did Aunt Sue tell you 'bout climbin' on that thing?

WENDY: We bettah be careful.

SUE: No, 'bout the eggs 'n climbing.

WENDY: We bettah not climb with our eggs, else'n we'd drop 'em.

You will notice that this story bears many of the characteristics noted above. The adult provides the "scaffolding" for the story, coaching the child along the way. What is particularly striking is that the questions the adult asks are very similar to the questions often asked about expository writing in schools. The adult asks for a strict chronology and coaches the child when the answer is not quite on target. Notice, too, that the adult's final question is designed to elicit the lesson or moral of the story. Thus the parable-like characteristics of this story parallel teacher efforts to extract the "point" of a reading

passage or an incident recounted in a social studies text, for example.

The details of Wendy's narrative bring out its primary meaning, but there is little or no emotional evaluation of the actions of the characters. The actions are named and detailed, but the meaning of the story is not set forth in exposition or through any report of the emotions of those involved in the story.

Trackton

In contrast to Roadville stories, Trackton narratives use fact only as the germ for highly creative, fictionalized accounts. Where Roadville uses stories to reaffirm group membership and behavioral norms, Trackton uses stories to assert individual strengths and powers. Many or all of the participants in a conversation may wish to tell a story; however, only the most aggressive storyteller will win out. Thus Trackton stories are not likely to unify the listeners in any sort of agreement. On the contrary, stories may provoke challenges and counter-challenges, with the best stories eliciting highly diverse additional stories, all designed not to unify the group, but to set out the individual merits of each member of the group.

Trackton stories use few formulaic openings, except for the storyteller's introduction of him/herself. Frequently an abstract precedes the story, asserting that the point of the story is to parade the strengths and victories of the storyteller. Trackton's stories make little use of strict chronology, moving from event to event with numerous interspersions of evaluation of the characters' behavior. Often these interspersions will reiterate the point of the story. Typically, no formulaic closing is included, but there may be a reassertion of the strengths of the main character, which may serve as a

prelude to another tale of adventure. An example of a Trackton oral narrative is presented below:

Terry: (age 12) Ya don't know me, but you will. I'm Terry Moore, Ya might think I look sissy, sittin' in dat class akin' like I'm workin', ya know, but I'm de tough one around here, and I done been down to Mr. _____ office mor'n you kin count. Ya know, I'm de onliest one what can stand up to dat paddle of his. He burn me up. I'ma tell you 'bout dat. (pause) One day I wuz walkin' down de hall, now you wain't 'pozed to do dat, less'n you got a pass, and I ain't had no pass on my ass. And all of a sudden I hear somebody comin' and dere was a feelin' like my ass was caught for sure. And it was Mr. _____, and he come 'round de cornah like he knowed I wuz dere. I took out runnin'. (pause) Now don't ever run 'less'n ya' know you don't hafta stop. Dat wuz my mistake. It wuz good while it lasted. I run all the way down Main, but my feet 'n legs start hurtin' and then I got a strain, but den a power like Spider Man, 'n I look back, and dis web fall all over Mr. _____, 'n he struggle (pause) 'n he struggle (pause) 'n he struggle, 'n den dis big ol' roach come outta de walls of dem ol' buildings on Main, and dat roach start eatin' his head, (pause) his fingers, (pause) 'n his toes, (pause) 'n he holler, 'n he holler, 'n I come to de end of Main, 'n I stop to watch.

"Hey, Terry, listen, hep me."

"Yeah, I hep you, you gonna do what I say?"

"I do it, I do it. Just get me outta here." I jus' hold my sides laughin', him getting madder and madder. Ya know how it is, right?

So after I had me a good laugh, I go, "You gonna burn dat paddle up?"

"You kin have it, you kin have it." So I let 'im up, and call off dat roach and dat spider web, and we went back to school. But he didn't do what he say. He git me, 'n he took dat padd'e to me, and toh me up. (long pause) But somewhere out dere, old Spider Man, he know I'm takin' it for him, and he hep me out next time.

Summary of Contrasts

The oral traditions in Roadville and Trackton differ greatly. Roadville stories reaffirm commitment to community and church values by giving factual accounts of the weaknesses of members and by delineating the lessons learned in overcoming weaknesses. The sources of Roadville stories are personal experiences, church-related stories of Christian life, and testimonials given in church and home lesson circles. Roadville stories are tales of transgressions--tales that reiterate expected norms of behavior.

In contrast, Trackton stories use fact only in the universals of human strength and persistence as they are illustrated in the story. Indeed, fact is often hard to find in a Trackton story, although it is usually the seed of the story. Tales often include play songs, ritual insults, and cheers. Anyone other than the storyteller or main character may be subjected to mockery, ridicule, and challenges in order to prove that he or she is weak, poor, or ugly.

In both communities, stories have great entertainment value. In Roadville, a proverb, a witty saying, or a scriptural quotation inserted in a story adds to the entertainment value. Group knowledge of these storytelling devices reinforces the communal experience. In Trackton, various types of language play, imitations of other community members or television personalities, shifts of voice quality, gestures, rhetorical questions, and expressions of emotional evaluation can all add humor to a story, drawing out the interaction between the storyteller and the audience. In short, for Roadville, Trackton stories would be lies; for Trackton, Roadville stories wouldn't even be recognized as stories.

Influences on Written Language Use

In addition to the community investigations, studies were also conducted in Roadville and Trackton schools to determine the congruence between language use in the home and in academic settings. Stories were elicited from students and were transcribed from tape recordings. Students were then allowed to edit their transcribed stories, first without coaching and then with selected questioning.

As was suspected, the written stories reflected those characteristics that had been identified in the oral stories:

Roadville

A True Story

My name is Danny. My Daddy's name is Jimmy, and my brother's name is Marshall. We went out to the boat landing Saturday, and we had gone out there to fish. We were out on the water, and the boat started to sink. The water came up to the back seat. We were going back to the pier, and we were paddling our boat. There was another man paddling his boat too. This motor boat came by

"I do it, I do it. Just get me outta here." I jus' hold my sides laughin', him getting madder and madder. Ya know how it is, right?

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and swished a bunch of water into our boat. The man in the other boat asked us if we needed any help. My daddy said no. We got up to the pier and my daddy told me to throw the stopper (whatever you call it) out. Then we went to the dam and fished and caught a catfish and four brim. Then they opened the gate so we went up to the top of the dam. We caught two catfish. Then it was 7:40 and we left and went home.

Trackton

A $$$$ True Story

I was at Bingo at West Main Community Club, and I won $100.00! This is how it happened. My mamma and I went. She is really my Grandmamma, but I call her mamma because she raised me. The man called out I-28, and then he called G-49. And I yelled 'BINGO!' Mamma thought that I didn't have it. The card was checked, and then the man gave me four twenties and two tens. Mamma was hanging her mouth open, because she was so surprised. I was counting my money. I am going up to James Wilson's and buy one of those New Day plants for $5.50. I'm going to put the rest of it in my bank account. That's all.

By Terry Moore

I was there too. I was happy for my friend. I raised my arms in happiness.

By Tony Smith

Roadville writers maintained a strict chronology in a very factual presentation of material. There was little emotional evaluation of the events, and most stories included the summarizing moral that was so typical of the oral stories. Trackton stories, on the other hand, included a much more emotional rendering

of the details of the story, often building to a climax.

Thus it was evident that oral storytelling habits did carry over into the written mode. This carry-over, in turn, had serious implications for various educational and vocational settings. For example, in high school, students were required to write many more expository compositions than they were in the elementary grades. Such expository writing demanded more of the Roadville-type story features. In some school situations and many vocational settings, however, Trackton-type narratives were more successful. Our goal was to provide teachers with knowledge about each community's uses and styles of storytelling for classroom use across grade levels so that they could relate the structures and functions of each to appropriate uses. Teachers found ingenious ways of doing this. One high school class worked with a senior citizen center to help practice recognizing occasions for each type of writing. They soon realized, for example, that paramedical aides needed the Roadville reportive style in dealing with their clients. In contrast, city service representatives needed the Trackton style in explaining their services and in giving case studies of clients.

Implications for Education

The results of this research suggest that there is no dichotomy of oral and literate traditions, nor are there even two poles on a continuum. Rather, there seem to be two separate continua in which social consequences, audience roles, and group vs. individual identification overlap and converge in significant ways.

The findings of the Roadville and Trackton studies further suggest that educators must give some attention to the kind and degree of socio-cultural integration that an individual brings to the academic setting from his or her primary social unit.

Important factors include the type of literacy presentation that has been given to the student and the types of social activities and roles that the learner can engage in for access to oral and written language.

Another major concern emerging from these studies is the degree to which oral and written language uses are "lessoned" in discrete units, that is, the degree to which the socializer reduces the freedom that the child has in order to concentrate attention on a manageable domain of language use. As these studies traced the steps that children go through in learning how to write, clear but very different patterns of "lessoning" became evident.

Finally, this research also suggests the need to determine the extent to which oral and written language uses are the key modes of expression of self in the primary social unit.

The critical factor, then, to emerge from this research is that of context as enculturation. Educators must consider the ways in which the child learns the rules of language use--rules that are carried over and either contradicted, ignored, or reinforced in high school, in vocational training, and in adulthood. These rules vary across cultures and across the settings for reading and writing. A system of meanings is given to the uses of language, and this system is provided in the cultural tradition of a child's or an adult's membership in a particular social group.

Context includes a system of beliefs about the characteristics of language interaction. These beliefs are played out in such things as the composing process, and in the ability to talk about the composing process. It is from this belief system that appropriate reading and writing behaviors are learned.

Having the kind of information that the Roadville and Trackton studies provide, we can do more than we

did ten years ago when we simply talked about students coming from a "different" cultural tradition. We can now recognize these differences as necessary in presenting realistic understandings about the varying uses and styles of oral and written language in the "real" world. Recognition of these differences can help us develop students' potential for developing highly functional, highly relevant, and highly valued uses of language in many vocational and educational contexts.

SESSION I

COMPOSING PROCESSES AND DEVELOPMENT

A COGNITIVE MODEL OF THE WRITING PROCESSES OF ADULTS

Linda S. Flower
Carnegie-Mellon University

This research has had two main goals:

1. to develop a model of the composing process, that is, a description of key cognitive processes and how they are organized in the process of writing;

2. to use this model to explore parts of the composing process that are crucial to the success or failure of a writer (such as generating new ideas) and to compare the strategies and skills that good and poor writers bring to these tasks.

Procedures

Protocols were collected from adult subjects over a five-year period. Protocols are obtained by asking people to think aloud while they are composing. This thinking aloud is tape recorded, and the tapes are transcribed. Each protocol consists of about 10-15 pages of typed script and of the writer's notes and written draft.

This collection of protocols was analyzed to determine the cognitive processes involved in the composing process. From this analysis, a model of the composing process was developed. This model puts the work of the project in the form of a hypothesis that can serve as a springboard to further research.

Results

The current model incorporates the following hypotheses resulting from the research:

1. The writing process consists of planning (i.e., generating, goal-setting, and organizing), translating, and reviewing (which includes evaluating and revising).

2. Writing is a hierarchical, highly embedded process; for instance, the process of generating ideas is often embedded within the act of translating or producing prose.

3. The writing process is a goal-directed process. As people compose, they create a network of goals and subgoals that guide composing.

4. These goals give the composing process an episodic structure, which is supported by the investigation of pauses. People appear to be working in units of concentration and these units range from about nine seconds to twelve minutes, with the average pause being about two minutes long. This episodic pattern reflects in part the process of setting up and reviewing one's own goals through the act of composing.

Implications for Teaching and for Future Research

Alternative, traditional hypotheses about what guides composing besides goals have enormous implications for teaching. One of these hypotheses is that fluency and/or talent and inspiration guide writing. This suggests that teachers should focus on practice, repetition and correction, or on encouraging self-expression or involvement.

Another traditional hypothesis is that genre constraints, such as critical features and schema,

serve as guides. This means that teaching someone to write entails teaching genre knowledge and models or good examples. Unfortunately, students often know the genre model, but have trouble implementing it competently.

Over and over, subjects show that they know a lot more than they use and that they need strategies for accessing that information. They need the ability to select information and then to adapt it to the reader; they need to write reader-based rather than writer-based prose. One implication of a cognitive-process theory is that composing can be taught by focusing on higher-level skills--by teaching students how to generate ideas, how to form concepts, how to accommodate readers.

Cognitive-process research seems to have real potential for answering questions about teaching methods and diagnosing strategies people use. It can help discover answers to questions such as these:

1. How do writers deal with their audience?

2. How do writers actually represent a rhetorical problem to themselves as they write?

3. How do plans enter the composing process and help people juggle all the constraints that writing imposes on short-term memory?

4. Are there ways to evaluate a writer's process, not just his or her product?

Answering these questions will help develop a more detailed understanding of how both good and poor writers compose.

THE WRITING DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Sondra Perl
Lehman College, CUNY

Many non-traditional students at the City University of New York (CUNY) are improving in writing. The Writing Development Project has examined the writing of these students to answer the following questions:

1. Are there particular patterns of growth in writing? If so, how many are there and how are they shared among this group?

2. Do non-traditional students share patterns of growth with better prepared writers or with younger writers?

3. In what area will greatest improvement lie--in correctness, in cognitive growth, in syntax, in rhetoric?

The purpose of the Writing Development Project is to construct a model that describes the development of writing abilities among non-traditional college students and to devise a measure that is sensitive to the unfolding of thought (rhetorical maturity) both in the development of single papers and in the development of a series of papers written over one academic year. The final measure will extend beyond mere counts and grapple with issues of rhetorical maturity--increasing complexity of thought, consistency of tone, awareness of audience-speaker relationships, density of argument, etc.

Procedures

To measure growth in writing, the project staff collected writing samples six times during the course of one year from 800 CUNY freshmen registered in basic

writing courses. Each of three topics administered in the fall was repeated in the spring.

In order to determine which students improved over the course of one year, project researchers had the papers read by faculty members who were trained in the Educational Testing Service's holistic scoring method. Those papers judged to have shown growth were then subjected to a closer analysis. This analysis was a traditional one, consisting of T-unit and error counts. Part of the reason for using this procedure was to see whether measures that led to quantifiable results would reveal any pattern of growth in the writing of non-traditional students. Another reason was to determine where CUNY freshmen would rank on the scale of current syntactic-maturity counts.

Results

Results of the project challenge the following current practices of research on writing:

1. Using T-unit length as a measure of growth. Although it is generally believed that growth in writing is accompanied by increases in T-unit length, many CUNY writers made dramatic improvement without such increases.

2. Using holistic scoring. Close analysis has indicated that writers whose papers received improved scores may not have gained in anything that can rightfully be called rhetorical maturity. Instead, they may have learned merely how to produce a piece of writing that fits a specific formula. Holistic scoring does not seem sensitive enough to differentiate between this narrow kind of growth and other kinds of growth in writing.

3. Assigning topics. The validity of talking about growth in writing is questionable when the occasions for writing are restricted, when writers have no choice over the topic or the amount of time spent writing, and when the study is not structured so that both the composing process and the written product can be examined.

4. Ignoring the context of writing. The project also questions the validity of studies that carefully control the collection of writing samples, but don't take the full context of writing into account. It suggests that researchers need to focus more attention on basic research in order to understand how the test situation affects writing development before they use results to make judgments on proficiency.

Implications for Teaching and for Future Research

Many of the original assumptions of this project were based on a narrow, perhaps reductive, definition of writing. The project's challenge, and the continuing challenge to research, is one of method--of designing studies and measures that do justice to the complexity inherent in the act of writing.

CHILDREN, THEIR LANGUAGE AND WORLD: INITIAL ENCOUNTERS WITH PRINT

Jerome C. Harste
Indiana University

Beginning reading and writing curriculum in most schools has been reduced to phonics, word recognition, penmanship, and spelling. These "basics" may not be basic to the way children naturally learn to read and write, and, in fact, may lead children to distrust the strategies they have developed themselves from natural, on-going encounters with written language in their environment.

Research in this program is based on these assumptions:

1. There is nothing more basic in language than meaning.

2. Children have discovered this basis prior to coming to school.

3. This information may facilitate the development of alternate instructional procedures that are more natural to both language teaching and learning.

Procedures

Forty-eight preschool children (ages 3, 4, 5, and 6) were asked to do five simple tasks: (1) read common commercial labels, (2) dictate and read a story, (3) read or pretend to read a story and a letter, (4) write anything they could write, and (5) write or pretend to write a story and a letter. Response patterns are being studied by sex, age, family life style, and the formality of the child's prior language instruction. Additionally, information collected from inner-city children is being compared with similar

information already collected from children in other settings.

Results

The research undertaken up to this point in the project has produced several insights.

First, written language is not only a complex social event, but also the very complexity of the event supports control. Children in this project monitored elements within the context of the situation to make literacy--real literacy--decisions. When context, pragmatics, and semantics converged, as they do in most natural language settings, the quality of their decisions improved. For example, when children were given a blank sheet of paper and a felt-tipped pen and asked to write their names and anything else that they could write, about 33% of the products produced by three-year-old children did not reflect a clear distinction between writing and drawing. However, when children were given a blank sheet of paper and a pen and asked to draw a picture of themselves and then to write their names on the back, nearly 100% of the three-year-old children distinguished writing from drawing.

Additionally, written language literacy is a multimedia event from the perspectives of both perception and production. Children in the sample freely moved to drama, art, numerals, and speech in an attempt to placehold their meaning. For example, some of the responses were particularly enlightening when children were shown a variety of objects and asked, "What do you think this says?" Several students, across two studies, responded "book" when shown a picture of an actual road sign with the name of their city on it. Investigation revealed that students from two different cities reconstructed an appropriate mental context in which what they saw would make sense. In this instance, the sign signaled a Sesame Street sign and hence "book" since every Sesame Street book

has a Sesame Street sign on it. What appeared to be a graphophonemic response ("book" for Bloomington--the city for some of the students) was actually a semantic response. By using the multiple cues present in the written language setting, children actively sought an appropriate context that gave meaning to what they saw. Data such as these strongly suggest a multimodal perceptual cycle and the need to study written language as a semiotic event.

Finally, literacy, meaning, and language growth are context specific. Complex relationships exist between linguistic resources and linguistic constraints. Written language literacy is not a monolithic skill that, once learned, can be universally applied. The setting dynamically interacts with what is known. In its specific detail, the act of writing itself depends on both the situation in which it is accomplished and the invention of the writer. This assertion is supported by stories elicited from young subjects under three conditions. When children were given picture story books and asked to read, personal anecdotes were triggered. When children were given a box of objects and asked to select two or three and tell stories, labels were elicited (or a combination of a label and a functional description for using the object). When children were given a blank sheet of paper and told to write stories, they told stories that reflected the elements of an adult story grammar. Each setting provided not only an opportunity to inventory what was known, but also new opportunities to maintain and generate meaning. To impose a single cultural conventional form like story grammar across these products is to deny the generative nature of language and meaning in the creation of the languaging event.

Implications for Teaching and for Future Research

The message in these data is clear: To understand written language growth and development, researchers simply must stop confusing convention for

language. Much of what is now seen as development is but an artifact of current and past instruction, of the constraints operating in the language setting adults establish, and/or of the conventional bifocals through which language growth has been viewed. Until the hypotheses children test about language are acknowledged, until what is natural development is separated from what is artifactal development, the issue of optimum instruction cannot be addressed.

A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF CHILDREN'S PLANNING AND COHESION IN THREE MODES OF DISCOURSE: INTERACTIVE SPEECH, DICTATION, AND WRITING

Victor M. Rentel
Ohio State University

At the core of education is the concept of growth. The long-term goals of this longitudinal study are understanding the bases on which children come to know the elements and attributes of writing as well as understanding what transpires as children move through successive stages of control over this medium. Immediate goals are to describe how beginning writers come to grips with the structure of narrative texts and to describe how they relate various layers of meaning encoded in texts through cohesive ties. The following are the overall research objectives of the project:

1. to compare and describe the ways in which children (K-2) employ cohesion in their oral and written texts;

2. to compare and describe the extent to which Proppian functions influence the production of children's oral and written stories;

3. to compare and describe the influence of socioeconomic class, dialect, sex, school, grade, and development on cohesion and on structure in three modes of discourse;

4. to describe the transition children make from spoken to written texts in terms of the variables noted above.

Background

Little is known about the beginning years in writing development. Aside from the recent work of Graves, most research on writing development has been focused upon older pupils. Yet these formative years may be the key to later success or failure in learning to write. A most important step in any new area of research is to separate relevant dependent and independent variables. Thus the first step in this project has been to examine the emerging development of children whose histories and school achievements typically differ dramatically. The selection of cohesion and story structure as dependent variables was premised upon arguments that cohesion and Proppian functions were likely to reveal important differences among children and kinds of tasks and between speech and writing during a critical transition period in development.

Procedures

Two populations of thirty children each, drawn from the kindergartens and first grades of two contrasting schools--an inner-city magnet school and an affluent suburban school--were compared over six systematic observations on three tasks. For one task, children listened to a story accompanied by pictures and then retold that story to a teacher's aide who had not yet heard that story. Stories were tape-recorded for later transcription into cohesion units. For the second task, students dictated a story to a scribe. The third task involved children in writing a story. This range of tasks gives an opportunity to examine the oral mode, the written mode, and a mode that ranges between these two.

Results

Work on the project has produced a measure for determining the degree to which the following

contribute to a story: cohesion, information distribution, and structure. This measure is currently being validated.

The following tentative conclusions have been generated from preliminary analyses of data:

1. When children retell a story, they don't tell the tale they have heard. Rather, they invent a new tale, although that tale is based on the one heard, and it has inherent in it many of those same Proppian functions as the original tale.

2. Cohesion is influenced by the degree of reading ability a child possesses. Thus there is some indication that literacy does play a role in the extent to which children are able to produce a coherent tale--at least the amount of exophoric reference is significantly reduced in the texts of those children who have caught on to reading.

3. Significant differences appear for the sex of subjects in the data so far analyzed. Girls produced more cohesive ties in each of the five categories of cohesion being totaled.

4. The two conditions for which a child's intentions are freer to roam produced more cohesive texts than the story-retelling condition.

5. The range of meaning the child gleans from a single conjunction varies widely. This conclusion is based on data from one study on the use of <u>and</u> as a cohesive tie.

6. Children gradually refine their use of ties as they grow in resources.

> Correspondingly, children seem to grow in resources as these resources meet their communicative intentions and needs.

Implications for Teaching and for Future Research

These findings will contribute to this project's attempt to develop a theory of early writing development--how children come to know the elements and attributes of writing--and, ultimately, to derive from this theory important instructional principles and methodology.

DEVELOPMENT OF REFERENCING SKILLS IN GOOD AND POOR ELEMENTARY AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL WRITERS

Elsa Jaffe Bartlett
N.Y.U. Medical Center

In interpreting any written text, a reader must keep track of incoming information and construct some organized representation of objects, characters, and events by relating new information to old. Of particular importance is a writer's skill in signaling appropriate referents for a text and in choosing a wording that will function effectively in a particular context to convey an intended meaning.

While it is clear that mature writers are able to choose and use referring expressions, this project is concerned with the development of children's skill in producing coherent referring expressions in written narrative text. The following are the principal questions addressed in the research:

1. To what extent are children at different ages and levels of writing skill able to take account of important factors in constructing referring expressions?

2. Can children produce coherent, unambiguous referencing in contexts where several potentially confusable referents must be distinguished?

3. Are children careful in signaling change of referent in sentence-subject positions?

4. To what extent are children able to detect referential ambiguity in these contexts? In their own texts? In the texts of others?

5. To what extent are children able to correct referential ambiguity once it occurs?

Procedures

The subjects have been about 200 children in grades 4-7 in four New York City public schools, although most of the data reported here came from 116 children in grades 5-7. At each grade level, the samples have included equal numbers of children who were judged by their teachers to be above or below average in current writing skill. In addition, to insure that subjects were roughly comparable in other literacy skills, samples were drawn only from those children in each class who read at grade level or above.

The general research strategy has been to analyze referring expressions in narrative texts produced by children under various elicitation conditions. These conditions are designed to vary the difficulty of the contexts in which these expressions are constructed. In most subjects studied, the child produced two stories about events pictured in two different cartoons, one that required writers to distinguish between two potentially confusable characters and one for which the distinction was not necesary. Each child also produced a third (baseline) story for which there were no contextual constraints. Subjects also participated in an editing task. Texts for the editing task consisted of eight short paragraphs, each of which contained at least one faulty or ambiguous referring expression. In two studies, children were also asked to edit one of their own stories for publication in a class anthology.

Results

Analysis of the data produced several interesting findings. First, when anaphoric expressions in the

baseline stories of the above- and below-average children were compared, data indicated that while the more skilled writers produced few ambiguities (averaging about .15 per text), the less skilled writers produced considerably more, averaging about one per text. Examining the pattern of ambiguity in relation to context reveals the problem to be not so much a general lack of skill in constructing anaphoric expressions as a lack of skill in selecting effective language in certain contexts. Thus, while the relatively few faulty expressions of the above-average writers were as likely to occur in one type of context as another, those of the below-average writers occurred only in certain contexts, such as attempts to switch sentence-subject referents and to distinguish between two same-age, same-sex characters.

Evidence for use of pronouns is somewhat mixed. The problems of below-average writers in the experimental stories did seem to be related to a failure to switch to other forms of anaphora when attempting to distinguish between two same-sex characters; however, their problems in the baseline stories did not seem to be particularly limited to pronoun use, since faulty pronouns accounted for about 45% of the ambiguity observed for the below-average writers, and 35% for the above-average writers. Additionally, below-average writers did not tend to use pronouns more often to accomplish anaphora than did their more skilled classmates.

In general, better writers used more pronouns in easy text, but fewer in difficult texts. They made content-sensitive changes in their language. The pattern of results suggests that the less skilled writers' problems may lie with their rather poor strategies for accomplishing anaphora in specific types of contexts.

In the editing tasks, below-average writers were generally less able to detect or correct ambiguities in the short paragraphs. Moreover, even when they managed to correct the problems, they tended to draw

on a different type of strategy from that used by the above-average writers. Above-average writers generally corrected these problems by adding or substituting some new information concerning the referent of the faulty expression. Below-average writers tended to correct the problems by avoiding the need to make definite reference altogether.

When the performances of 59 children were compared for the spontaneous editing of their own texts and of experimental texts, the comparison indicated that even children who had been able to detect and correct many of the referential ambiguities in the experimenter-prepared texts were unable to detect seemingly identical referential ambiguity in their own texts, despite the fact that the editing occurred some two to three weeks after composition. However, students did not have similar difficulty detecting other types of errors, such as missing subjects or predicates and faulty tense constructions. This result suggests that detection of referential ambiguity in the two situations may draw on a somewhat different range of skills.

Implications for Teaching

It must be concluded that teachers of writing should help students develop strategies for dealing with text ambiguity.

SESSION II

WRITING ASSESSMENT

AN EXAMINATION OF PROCEDURES AND IMPLICATIONS OF HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT OF WRITING

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It is impossible to do research without evaluation. It is also impossible to teach well without constantly evaluating. Yet there are enormous problems in any evaluation of writing performance. For instance, indirect measures of writing ability, such as objective tests, can only measure splinter skills that relate to writing. Yet collecting writing samples does not automatically make an assessment valid. The student may not understand the constraints of the test situation, may not understand the topic, may not be stimulated by the topic, may not realize that he/she should edit for surface features. There are many possible miscommunications in the test situation. Just the fact that time constraints are imposed on the student's thinking affects the assessment because students then write merely to perform; they don't write with the commitment or intention that is possible in a non-timed situation.

The proposed research considers the nature of the interactions among the writing task, the test context, student writing abilities, student interpretation of and response to the task, and the reader's judgment of the finished piece. The research will attempt to accomplish this by addressing these basic questions:

1. In what ways do differences in the formulation of writing topics and in the contexts for writing texts lead to significant differences in student performance and readers' ratings?

2. In what ways does development of writing skills over a period of several years affect performance on timed writing tests, accounting for lower as well as higher holistic scores (i.e., general

impression scores) as maturing students define the writing task in increasingly complex ways?

Design and Rationale

The Bay Area Writing Project provides the NIE Writing Assessment Project with its chief data sources: writing assessments administered in urban and suburban school systems in collaboration with the Writing Project and its cadre of teacher specialists. A variety of procedures, including holistic scoring, feature analysis of writing, oral protocols of students during the composing of timed writing tests, and statistical analysis of scores, will be applied to the writing of students from diverse school populations. Holistic scoring will be used, despite what it obscures, because it is a touchstone that tells how a reader responds to this piece of writing in relation to others on the same topic for a similar population. Additional information can be obtained by analyzing the characteristics of the papers to see what features get good and bad scores--to see what teachers are reacting to.

Two studies will illuminate these processes as components of a model of the assessment situation, which includes the following:

1. The process by which the test maker constructs a writing task. What is going on in the test maker's mind during the construction of a test? To what extent is the test maker attempting to write a topic that will enable students to write with adequate conviction, adequate knowledge, adequate intention? How can the test maker determine that his/her topic is enabling rather than disenabling for most writers?

2. The process of performing: the act of composing. What does the student writer understand the task to be? Which of the tester's constraints does he/she understand and use, and which does he/she ignore? Given understanding of the task, how does the student writer go about accomplishing it?

3. The process of scoring. Teachers score high for qualities of writing they emphasize in their own teaching, often remaining blind to other qualities. Typically, teachers find it easy to teach and judge mechanical correctness while finding it harder to teach or recognize higher-level discourse skills.

A first study will be designed to account for what makes a good topic, task, and context for measuring writing performance. Subsidiary research questions include (a) the characteristic effects of particular topics or types of topics, (b) the kinds of instructions to writers that are particularly enabling or disenabling in the test situation, and (c) the identification, prediction, and control of topic effects, or the identification of individual and group differences that may create variability in topic effects.

A second study will investigate developmental features of student writing that may cause lowered holistic scores even though they are signs of increased maturity and a higher level of complexity in what a student attempts. Perhaps the most detrimental effect of all scoring systems and test measurements is that they reward superficial perfection or absence of error without providing for recognition of certain kinds of imperfection or flaws as indicative of higher level thinking or greater maturity in a developing writer. The moment of testing may not coincide with the moment when a writer has firmly mastered a new

technique, but may coincide with periods of disequilibrium, when the writer is striking out into new territory, taking risks, abandoning the safe and familiar. The study examines the writing of students who participated in three or more years of a local assessment and whose holistic scores do not reflect linear improvement from year to year. The study seeks to account for these fluctuations in scores while seeking implications for all testing of student writing. A subsidiary analysis will be made of differences in reader standards from year to year, using a pooled rereading of papers to provide a standard score.

Anticipated Results

The principal outcomes of the project should be (1) information about the nature and control of unintended interactions among topics, writers, test contexts, and readers, and (2) information about the effects of development on test performance, effects that might account for frequent findings of apparent no-improvement or even regression of scores in holistic assessments that compare samples of writing from the same students over time. The project should uncover tentative procedures for matching teacher or tester expectation of a writing occasion with the actual student interpretation of and response to that occasion. It should also suggest ways to increase the power of holistic assessment to discriminate among students, writing programs, and levels of maturity in writing performance.

WRITING COMPETENCY PROGRAM

Anne J. Herrington
Johnson State College

From 1977 to 1979, Johnson State College had a grant with two primary objectives:

1. to develop a writing competency exam to use as the primary means for judging attainment of a proficiency requirement for graduation;

2. to train faculty from a variety of disciplines to use writing as an integral component of their courses.

The central assumptions underlying the cross-disciplinary project are that (1) students who write frequently will learn more from any course than students who do not, and (2) writing assignments that are sequenced and designed to help students meet the intellectual demands of the course will be more valuable than assignments that are not.

Background

Although some may view it as reductive, competency testing can have a positive effect when it is done in the context of a specific community's values. Design of the Johnson exam was guided by the following assumptions about important competencies:

1. The exam should judge a writer's ability to create discourse.

2. The exam should assess skills that are necessary for almost any type of writing to a public audience: the ability to explain a point of view clearly and reasonably to a reader and write with a minimum of distracting grammatical

> errors. The faculty also wanted to assess one conceptual skill that any graduate of a liberal arts college should be able to demonstrate--the ability to write analogically.

Clearly, the standard of judgment is relative to the values and standards of those making the judgment. In this case, the general criteria reflect what the faculty and a cross-section of Johnson students felt were skills absolutely necessary for a college graduate to have.

Procedures

The exam consists of an impromptu essay, which receives separate rhetorical and grammatical evaluations, and a short editing exercise. During a period of three hours, students are expected to write an explanatory essay in response to one of four possible questions (the general topics having been announced in advance). The purpose, mode, and attitude of the audience are specifically defined, and all questions require students to draw on knowledge from course work or readings; however, each question is open enough to allow some choice of the specific topic.

The essays are evaluated rhetorically by faculty readers using a scoring guide for rhetorical traits. A separate evaluation is performed to count the occurrence of a limited set of errors in the essay. Using faculty readers representing all disciplines has two benefits: First, this policy insures that the exam standards are set by a cross-section of the entire college; second, it trains the readers in a rhetorical evaluation procedure that is particularly appropriate for evaluating writing in their own courses. By this means, an inter-disciplinary faculty can be encouraged to look beyond surface features to address students' real needs.

This was primarily a practitioner's project. It did not include any basic research component to test the fundamental assumptions underlying both major objectives. For the competency exam, the only research performed was evaluation of such matters as reader reliability, sub-score correlations, correlations between exam results/writing-course grades/grade-point averages, and faculty and student opinions regarding the exam itself and the writing skills valued. No really substantive investigation of content or construct validity was conducted.

Observations

An informal analysis of certain linguistic cues in a group of essays has reinforced the perception that the rhetorical criteria do distinguish effective versus ineffective uses of intellectual strategies. In general, the successful papers evidence control of a wider range of strategies to accomplish a specific task. For example, in successful papers, the grammatical subjects show a consistent focus on the organizing principle and thesis; additionally, various classification strategies are used to establish major generalizations. In unsuccessful papers, the grammatical subjects underscore the lack of focus, and classification strategies are used rarely, if ever. These differences suggest one approach to validating the claim that the exam assesses skill at writing analogically.

Implications for Teaching and for Future Research

The two fundamental questions of interest in light of experience with the Johnson exam are as follows:

1. If one wishes to assess how well a writer can do real-life transactional writing, does a writing sample, which is

an artificial task, provide a valid basis for judgment?

2. Would a diagnostic assessment of a writer's composing process be a significantly helpful supplement to or replacement for an assessment of a writer's product?

Obviously, before the second question can be pursued, a reliable and efficient method must be designed for use by practitioners to diagnose significant features of the composing processes of their students (e.g., planning strategies, audience representation). The second question is perhaps the more important to practitioners because the procedures for diagnosing students' writing skills will affect initial definitions of writing problems. Defined problems will, in turn, affect the content and method of instruction. If a writing sample or a multiple-choice error recognition test is the only means of diagnosing these skills, instruction will tend to be biased toward the text alone, not the process that led to creating that text.

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COLLEGE WRITING PROGRAMS

James L. Kinneavy
University of Texas

Widespread public concern over the writing abilities of young Americans has prompted colleges and universities to develop new programs for teaching writing. Yet knowledge of how to evaluate such programs and their effects remains at a rudimentary and impressionistic level. For this reason, the University of Texas--a large, multi-purpose institution strongly committed historically to teaching writing at all levels of the curriculum--has set out to develop a comprehensive set of evaluation materials capable of serving the needs of its own composition program and those of colleges and universities nationwide.

Currently in its first year, this three-year project will develop a conceptually based and widely applicable set of procedures and materials for evaluating college writing programs. These materials and procedures will be incorporated into a packet for distribution to schools and other institutions that are demanding evaluation of existing writing programs.

The project combines three dimensions for writing-program evaluation:

1. evaluating the teaching of writing, examining nationwide curricular and instructional practices to develop instruments for assessing and describing effective writing-instruction behaviors;

2. evaluating writing itself, examining both the processes students use and the products they produce;

3. evaluating the goals of postsecondary writing programs, examining the real and the ideal goals for programs in divergent settings across the nation.

Proposed Procedures

The curricular and instructional aspects of the teaching of writing will be judged according to both the process and the product that the methodologies are producing to see if they are compatible. Then curriculum, instruction, process, and product will be judged in the light of what the institution says the goals of its writing programs are and what society says the goals of a college program ought to be.

The three settings in which these dimensions will be examined are the college composition course itself, non-composition courses that use sequential writing, and real-life situations requiring writing. Evaluative norms are considered to be (1) the functions of the discourses (i.e., the aims) that are used in the course or in the situation and (2) the forms of the discourse (i.e., the modes).

There are several novel procedures in this evaluation project:

1. It utilizes a comprehensive framework to address the problem of evaluating.

2. It introduces several new dimensions into traditional fields of inquiry.

3. It attempts to translate current and new knowledge into an evaluation scheme that can be applied to real college settings.

Previous and on-going University of Texas research, as well as the research of other institutions, will be accessed for this project.

Implications for Teaching and for Future Research

Texas staff members have examined such areas as journal writing, freewriting, the testing of mechanics, the use of tutorial methods, the use of the computer to teach grammar, and the advantages of the meristic (i.e., segmented) instructional approach to writing in relation to the holistic approach. On the basis of findings of this research and the research of other establishments, project members have come to question the following areas of composition instruction and research:

1. holistic rating of essays;
2. competency tests in grammar and usage;
3. error counts;
4. sentence combining;
5. aspects of cohesion ties.

On-going and subsequent research may revise or amend this list of questionable areas.

SESSION III

WRITING INSTRUCTION IN CONTEXT

NATIONAL STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL WRITING

Arthur N. Applebee
Stanford University

In the last few years a number of very specialized studies examining the writing process have come out of various academic disciplines. There have also been a number of detailed case studies that look at writing in very intense, but limited contexts. At the same time, few studies have focused on typical instruction in composition--particularly secondary-school instruction.

The National Study of Secondary School Writing seeks to remedy this lack of descriptive data by examining the following:

1. the nature and frequency of writing tasks that students are asked to complete;

2. the demands inherent in specific writing tasks;

3. the instructional context of writing.

Design

Two secondary schools were selected for on-site observation and interviews with students and teachers. The two schools differ radically in demographic characteristics; one is a small, select-admissions school that sends virtually all of its graduates on to college, while the other is a rather typical suburban high school serving students with a full range of academic abilities. During one year of on-site observations, the researchers spent 259 hours observing ninth and eleventh graders in all subject areas.

While classroom observation provided the basis for task-analysis data and an objective examination of actual (as opposed to perceived) writing instruction, the researchers extended the data base by obtaining survey data from a national sample of over 750 teachers. The survey asked teachers to respond to a variety of questions regarding their personal approaches to writing instruction. Survey respondents were also asked to submit one "successful" and one "unsuccessful" essay from a recent assignment.

This project includes the following major research activities:

1. a detailed analysis of writing samples (from both the local schools and the national survey), focusing on such features as cohesion, logical structure, syntactic complexity, and mechanical accuracy;

2. an analysis of assumptions about writing and the teaching of writing as reflected in textbooks most frequently used by teachers in the survey sample;

3. observational studies of the writing processes fostered by particular instructional patterns;

4. a longitudinal study of the writing experiences and the development of writing abilities in 24 students across the high-school years.

Observations

Although the study has not yet been completed, data gathered during the first year of the project permit some preliminary observations.

Writing was characterized for the project as occurring in "any situation in which students were using written language to record information or experiences." Using this criterion, the researchers found that a great deal of writing was going on in the classes they observed; students were involved in some type of writing activity approximately 44% of the time in classes across all subject areas. Most of the writing in this global category, however, was of a mechanical nature. Depending upon the content-area, typical activities included filling in workbook or mimeographed exercises, copying from the blackboard or a textbook, and translating passages from foreign languages. Only about three percent of the students' time was spent on "extended writing" activities--the generation of written discourse. In English classes, extended writing activities comprised about ten percent of class time. When extended writing was undertaken, the product was usually informational in nature, took up one page or less, and was completed within one day.

The study also revealed that little attention was given to prewriting activities or revision. The average amount of time spent from the moment of topic assignment to the beginning of writing was only three minutes. The production of more than one draft was relatively infrequent, even in English classes; only about thirty percent of English teachers regularly required drafts.

In terms of instructional support, teachers tended to manage virtually all aspects of most student writing; most of the problems inherent in composing coherent text were taken over by the teacher. The teacher normally determined the topic, the amount and nature of prewriting activities, the time limit for producing the text, and the nature and extent of any rewriting. In contrast, evaluation of student learning by means of essay tests required students to use their own resources for virtually all aspects of the writing task except the selection of a topic.

Evaluation normally focused on mechanical considerations, with seventy percent of the teachers in the national survey indicating that they almost always marked mechanical errors. However, just under fifty percent of these same respondents thought that it was important to mark mechanical errors. The least frequent type of teacher response was to content and ideas. English teachers who responded to content tended to stress style and expression. Where such responses were made in social science, science, and mathematics classes, the emphasis was placed on accuracy of ideas and soundness of conclusions.

Conclusions

A major implication of this study is not that students should write more, but that they should write differently. Too much attention is given to fill-in-the-blank type writing and not enough to self-generated, meaningful prose. In most cases of extended writing, students are required to write for one audience--the teacher. This study indicates that teachers, especially those in the content areas, are usually poor audiences. It appears that neither teachers nor students have a sense of writing as a process, and thus they both fail to conceive of the writing act as a means of idea development.

THE WRITING PROJECT FOR FACULTY FROM DISCIPLINES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

George Deaux
Temple University

The inadequacy of reading and writing skills among entering college students is notorious. Across the nation, colleges and universities face the problem of finding methods and instructors to help increasingly large numbers of students correct deficiencies in writing skills, build those skills to college levels, and maintain those levels of achievement. Temple University is attempting to meet these problems by training faculty from departments other than English to teach composition. It is anticipated that the program will prepare up to 35 instructors to teach freshman composition classes in the three years of its operation.

Background

Temple University is committed to the improvement of student writing across the curriculum. While this commitment presumes the need for all instructors to give greater attention to composition, it is recognized that freshman composition classes still provide the most logical and economical channel for concentrated writing instruction. The university is determined to improve its writing curriculum and meet student demand for instruction in basic skills, although it must do so within the limits of severe budget restrictions. These conditions seriously limit the number of new faculty that can be hired, so it was determined that any significant increase in the composition staff would have to come from the present faculty.

Procedures

The nature and content of the first year of the project were predicated on certain assumptions made by the project staff about the experienced college teachers who would be the trainees:

1. They could recognize good and bad writing.

2. They wanted to encourage good writing.

3. They assigned writing rather frequently in their own courses.

4. They paid attention to the quality of writing, but were reluctant to enter into any kind of critical discussion with the student beyond editorial corrections of the writing.

It was assumed that the trainees would best profit from intensive, formal instruction in error identification and analysis, and in such matters as mechanics, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage. It was further assumed that, as experienced teachers, the trainees did not need instruction in classroom management and conference techniques, nor in how to engage students in discussions of ideas and content. The project staff was assured that faculty from other disciplines regularly concerned themselves with the ideas and content of student papers and would not fail a paper because of mechanical considerations.

The training program lasts one year. Each trainee is assigned to teach a freshman composition class for two consecutive semesters. Trainees are prepared through an intensive, week-long orientation session during registration week. This session is followed by a series of practica that deal with theoretical issues and a series of seminars that feature outside speakers who deal with broad issues of theory and practice.

As the trainees took charge of their freshman composition classes, a means of ongoing evaluation was instituted in order to protect students from arbitrary or capricious grading. This evaluation was carried out through a second-reader system in which each trainee submitted two full sets of student papers that he or she had graded. These papers were then re-evaluated by an experienced composition teacher, who discussed any discrepancies with the trainee.

Observations and Results

An evaluation of the program at the end of its first full year of operation permits certain tentative observations:

1. The orientation session was absolutely indispensible, although there will be some changes and redefinitions.

2. The continuing practica were clearly a failure. Complaints and poor attendance indicate that the trainees were not interested in theoretical issues, but would rather receive help with the grading of themes.

3. The seminars were quite successful, but not for the intended audience. The primary audience was English teaching assistants. Trainees generally ignored the seminars.

4. The second-reader evaluation system helped protect students from arbitrary grading, but was of little use otherwise.

5. Student evaluations were useful in determining how the program was working,

but were of little use in evaluating individual instructors.

The project staff also conducted a year-end evaluation of the trainees' competency in grading student themes. Five graded essays were collected from each of the trainees. Each theme was then graded by two experienced composition instructors. The findings indicate the following:

1. There was wide disagreement about grades. Sixteen of the 35 themes received grades that varied by more than one letter grade, and approximately one-fourth varied by two or more letter grades. However, there was no consistent pattern in grade assignment between experienced and inexperienced instructors; the experienced composition instructors were as likely to disagree with each other as they were to disagree with the trainees. The only discernible pattern was a tendency for the experienced instructors to grade slightly lower.

2. Both experienced and inexperienced instructors were equally conscientious in correcting formal elements, but no instructor marked all possible errors. Although there was no clear pattern, inexperienced instructors were more likely to mark as wrong constructions that are generally considered acceptable or marginally acceptable.

3. There was a major difference in the manner in which experienced instructors and trainees responded to content and ideas. The experienced instructors made comments on content and ideas three times more frequently than did the trainees.

The distinguishing characteristic of the experienced writing instructor as opposed to the novice was that the experienced person immediately established a personal relationship with the writer through personal responses and comments about ideas. Experienced instructors performed as if the goal of composition instruction was to establish clear thinking. Novice instructors tended to see the goal as formal and mechanical accuracy. Novice instructors may have a stereotyped image of what English instructors are supposed to do and thus attempt to conform to that image.

Future Work

Major changes will be made in the structure of the program to eliminate weaknesses discovered during the first year. The orientation program will be continued in order to build the confidence of the trainees. The restructured program will focus primarily on the goals of composition, writer-audience relationships, and methods by which instructors can engage students through comments and conference discourse.

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY WRITING PROGRAM

Joan Graham
University of Washington

At the University of Washington, professors in many disciplines have become concerned about their students' performance as writers. The problems that they most frequently encounter in student essays include shallow content, weak organization, imprecise phrasing, and faulty mechanics. Some professors are particularly worried because they realize that badly formed expression often reflects problems in thought. Most faculty members, however, are not accustomed to analyzing problems of expression or to commenting on them in the kind of detail that can give students the guidance they need.

Although students do receive detailed comment on their written work in traditional English composition classes, the kind of writing done in those classes is often quite different from that which is required in other course work and in later job-related activities. Within a traditional composition class, the problems of managing objective material cannot be adequately addressed. The university has recently embarked on a new and unique approach to these problems through development of The Interdisciplinary Writing Program.

Design

The program is based on the cooperative efforts of faculty who specialize in teaching writing and faculty in a number of subject disciplines, such as history, political science, and sociology. Lower-division lecture courses in these disciplines are offered in conjunction with "Writing Labs." For example, a student enrolls in Political Science 101, "Introduction to Politics," and in Interdisciplinary Studies 209, "Writing Lab/Political Science 101," a fully developed composition course that carries equal credit with the lecture course. For these courses,

the writing teachers and the lecturers deliberately coordinate their work. Topics for the lab writing assignments are drawn from reading material in the lecture course, preliminary drafts of essays to be submitted in the lecture course are made part of the required work in the writing lab, and due dates for lecture-course essays are spaced to allow for lab-course emphasis on rewriting.

In these practical and intellectually demanding composition courses, instructors allow real writing occasions to mold the way they teach writing. Students are interested in their material for its own sake and write to satisfy well-defined external demands. When writing instruction is offered in the context of material that students are studying, varying relations among content, purpose, and form can be demonstrated specifically. Furthermore, by working with complex material students learn how, in refining expression, one refines concepts--in effect, refines thought.

In Writing-Lab courses, much of the writing is analytical, since the emphasis in the associated lectures is on the analysis of ideas, actions, and events. When description and narration appear, they are most often in the context of an analytical purpose. Lab class discussions concentrate on the generation of material, organization, continuity, and clarity. Portions of student essays--both preliminary and final drafts--are reproduced to serve as the basis for sessions on focus, depth of development, ways of beginning and ending, precision in phrasing, and so on.

Because all students are writing in relation to the same material and for the same general purpose, their work can be usefully compared. Those whose writing is thin learn quickly what it means to develop an idea; empty generalizing becomes easy to recognize, as does inappropriate reliance on jargon. Class work on the sentence level is designed to improve fluency and precision. In addition to class activities, there

are frequent individual conferences in which students and instructors discuss essay drafts.

Results

Evaluation of students' essays has produced statistical evidence that Writing-Lab classes are unusually productive. For one academic year, copies of the final essays written each quarter by all students taking Western Civilization were collected: This sample of some 500 essays included approximately 125 written by students who were concurrently taking a Writing Lab. Randomly mixed essays were evaluated by trained readers using the holistic scoring method, and Writing-Lab students scored significantly higher than those in the control group. The Writing-Lab students had no initial advantage, but by the end of a quarter they had, as a group, clearly surpassed their peers. Evidence is rarely found of such improvement in the complex activity of writing as the apparent result of short-term curriculum intervention.

Observations

Writing-Lab courses appeal both to students who conspicuously lack writing skill and to students who are already doing good work but would like to do better. Those who have just completed remedial work profit from the practical orientation of lab courses and from the chance to see how more experienced students approach writing problems. Stronger students gain from having their work carefully commented on as they undertake writing tasks more complex than could be assigned in general composition courses. All benefit from the opportunity to concentrate their energy in coordinated course work.

Writing-Lab courses have also stimulated faculty interest in the role of writing in instruction. Lecturers now often assign more writing in survey courses, and they give more attention to the design of

writing assignments. The activities of teaching assistants are changing too, as more stress is placed on helping students improve as writers. Correspondingly, a new program is being developed to encourage teaching assistants to use practical pre-writing exercises in quiz sections and to make constructive and specific comments on the writing that students produce.

TRAINING SEMINARS FOR GRADUATE-STUDENT TEACHERS OF COMPOSITION

Sylvia Manning
University of Southern California

The University of Southern California recently amended its general education requirements to include two semesters of expository writing. This change created the need for a modest increase in staff to teach freshman composition classes. Since, like many other universities, the University of Southern California is heavily dependent on graduate teaching assistants to staff such classes, the university decided to establish a program to train graduate students from various disciplines to teach writing.

Procedures

The project began with a two-week training program for new teaching assistants just prior to the opening of classes. Approximately half of the graduate students enrolled in the program were English majors. The remainder came from a variety of other disciplines. Few of the students, even the English majors, had confidence in their ability to teach writing.

Because of the intensive nature of the seminars, a reading list was sent to all students well in advance of actual training. The seminars themselves began with topics in rhetorical theory, moved through topics in applied linguistics to discussions of specific curricula, and provided group practice in the evaluation of student essays. The teaching assistants were taught how to organize and present instruction in a flexibly paced program that combines classroom workshops with writing lab assignments. Following the two-week series and the assignment of participants to teaching positions in freshman composition courses, supplemental workshops were held twice a week during the fall semester. These workshops covered a wide

range of subject matter, from additional topics in rhetoric to practical, problem-solving issues.

Although the initial seminars served their basic purpose--that of providing novice instructors with sufficient knowledge and skill to take charge of freshman writing classes--responses from program participants suggested the need for a substantially different structure in future seminars. Evaluations received from teaching assistants indicated that the seminars contained too much theory and not enough instruction in methodology. The evaluations also revealed a significant demand for instruction in grammar, despite the fact that participants were told that they ought not to teach formal grammar in their composition courses.

Training sessions for the following year were again conducted during the two-week period p. or to the fall semester, but they differed considerably from the earlier format. As before, the seminars started with theoretical issues, but this time they moved quickly into practical applications. While the first-year seminars relied heavily on large-group lectures from full-time faculty, the revised format provided for the extensive use of small-group instruction led by experienced teaching assistants. A brief review of grammar instruction was made available to all participants because it had been recommended by the first group of students.

Observations

Initially, seminar organizers were concerned about the ability of non-English majors to assimilate the instruction and take on the responsibility of teaching composition. As it turned out, these fears were essentially groundless. The major difference between the more successful participants and their less successful counterparts was not background in academic English, but the quantity and quality of their prior experiences in teaching.

ANALYSIS OF WRITING IN DIALOGUE JOURNALS AS A COMMUNICATIVE EVENT

Jana Staton
Center for Applied Linguistics

Traditionally, school writing deals almost entirely with the form of writing, rather than its function. Young writers are seldom encouraged to express their own ideas and concerns. They seldom have the opportunity to select their own topics, write for a real audience, and receive a personal response that addresses the content of their thought rather than their mistakes in grammar and spelling.

Dialogue journals are an excellent means of providing this opportunity because they are a unique form of private, written conversation conducted daily between students and their teacher. They provide a forum for purposeful writing; they also provide opportunities for growth in language functions, personal awareness, and flexibility in solving personal problems.

The dialogue journal represents conversation in written form. It creates a continuous demand to articulate that which is important to the writer. The journal also presents modeling and scaffolding for the student by a more knowledgable other person, who can extend or assist in the reasoning process. Thus, the purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the use of dialogue journals for students in terms of both psychological and language development.

Design

The data base for the study is a set of journals for a complete year from students in a sixth-grade classroom in Los Angeles. The 28 students were required to write in a personal journal each day during the school year. They were allowed to write about any topic or problem that interested or

concerned them. They could complain, ask questions, seek advice, express anxiety, or argue a point of view. Students could write as much as they wanted so long as they wrote at least three sentences per day. The teacher took home all of the journals each evening and responded personally to each entry. She answered questions, described events from her point of view, shared her feelings, and acknowledged the feelings of her pupils. She often suggested choices for coping with the problems of early adolescence. Variations in surface forms were accepted without comment; errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation were not corrected in any way. However, the teacher would often provide a model of the correct forms by using them in her response.

By the end of the school year, the student and teacher dialogue entries totaled 4600 pages, an average of about two and a half composition books per student. This corpus of writing is being analyzed in terms of such variables as discourse themes, variations in language functions, speech acts, and growth in intentional communication. The study also includes a comparative analysis of journal writing with in-class writing assignments. Taped interviews with individual students and with the teacher were conducted to gather participants' perspectives on the experience.

Observations

The attributes of dialogue-journal writing that distinguish it most markedly from traditional kinds of school writing are that it is functional, self-generated, and interactive. Being functional means that it gets things done for each writer; both teacher and student can complain and express personal feelings. Being self-generated means that each student writer chooses the topics of value and concern, which are, in turn, treated as worthwhile by the teacher. Interactive means that the writing is far more like oral conversation than written text with respect to

such features as question/answer pairs and topic recycling/elaboration.

These three attributes indicate that dialogue writing is a missing link in the development of writing, filling the space between the student's existing competence in oral language and the formal requirements of written exposition.

Analysis of the possible consequences for journal-writing activities are just being explored. Several areas seem particularly promising for students.

First, journal writing appears to facilitate the student's understanding that one's audience may have a different point of view. Because this kind of interactive writing leads naturally to understanding that each person has a point of view, the student's writing over the year becomes increasingly clearer and more coherent.

In contrast with in-class assignments, journal writing allows much greater variation in the syntactic complexity of language and in the kinds of language functions and the strategies for revealing those functions. Language functions are defined here as the uses of language to get things done in social interaction--complaining, requesting help, promising; these functions are mastered in oral language by age five or six. Syntactic complexity is defined as the use of more relational language--often measured by the T-unit.

Another promising consequence of dialogue journals is that they can provide a context for writing that includes most of the components of oral language interaction--a known audience, the freedom to choose topics and change them, and most of all, the empowering of the writer to use language to make things happen. In this context, analysis of a small sample has shown that student journal writing generally has a higher T-unit count than in-class personal, descriptive essays. The variation in language

functions is also greater. A sample of three students' journal writing, each a single day's entry of about 100 words, evidenced many different language functions--clarifying, informing, expressing feelings, complaining, offering help, making requests. The same three students' in-class essays, written at the same time of year, manifested only the functions of describing or informing.

The third potential consequence of journal writing (at least for this age and for the kind of teacher who is concerned with developing students' autonomy, self-control, and positive self-concepts) is that students will become more proficient at using rational thinking strategies for solving personal problems.

The journals provide an opportunity for students to express their thoughts directly. Two characteristics of writing--distance from the event and audience, and the potential for extending one's conversational turn for as long as one wants--seem to elicit more of the student's "inner speech," which is viewed as close to written language. The teacher is then able to model alternative strategies for solving a problem in the response.

This combination of (1) a teacher who elaborates on one's topics the way a parent does and (2) the feedback to oneself of inaccurate or distorted perceptions from the writing may facilitate students' self-awareness. This combination may also enhance students' awareness of the relationship between their own actions and the consequences of those actions, a crucial step in the development of reasoning.

A progression over the year appears in the small sample of journals studied thus far. Early entries are brief and are often a jumble of disconnected topics. The teacher must supply alternatives, elaborate on reasons for actions, ask questions, and offer evaluations. By the end of the year, the same students are engaging in longer and longer monologues, using

language strategies, and taking on the turns of dialogue that were once the teacher's. In these later sophisticated monologues, students begin with a description of the problem, conduct an analysis, offer an interpretation or evaluation, and then, in essence, ask the teacher, "How was that?" This behavior suggests growth in the ability to reflect on and control one's own life--growth that occurs through a written medium and is perhaps facilitated by it.

DINNER MEETING

MIDSTREAM REFLECTIONS

Peter Elbow
Evergreen State College

When I asked Marcia and Richard yesterday what would be most useful for me to do tonight, Marcia said, "Well, you are a writer; talk about what you see from that position," and I didn't spill my drink.

In general, I have never been able to think of myself as a writer. This makes me reflect on the meaning of "being a writer." If you call someone a writer, he or she must write novels or poetry. Writing books to say what you think is true doesn't feel like "being a writer." These, at least, turn out to be the preconceptions and assumptions in my mind.

Nevertheless, in the last couple of years I really have begun, at times, to think of myself as a writer. It feels very different. For example, I've begun to want to take time away from teaching in order to write. I had always thought of people who did that as the enemy.

But I don't feel secure about being a writer. When I recently finished my book after working five years on it, I took some time off from both teaching and writing. I was willing to define it frankly as time off--time to be with my family. But secretly I hoped that I would wake up in the morning and find myself having to write a poem or a short story or a novel. It didn't happen. I just had fun with my family. I began to think that maybe I wasn't a real writer, because a real writer wakes up in the morning and can't stop himself from writing poems or stories.

Another thing that makes me still feel that maybe I'm not a real writer is that my raw, first-draft writing isn't any better than it was; in fact, it is worse. It is more of a mess than it used to be. True, there is more in it and I can do more with it, but it is not better. Indeed, it cannot be called

"prose." (And I don't mean that it could be called poetry.) I had always assumed that as I learned how to write, I would turn out prose because there is this notion that a writer turns out prose. I don't turn out prose when I sit at a typewriter. That is dispiriting.

All these thoughts suddenly made me think about how it happens over and over again. There is this continual re-experiencing--re-bumping up against--that uncertainty and anxiety about what it is to be a writer. Over and over again it feels as though I am not a writer, yet I turn around and do what a writer does--I write--and yet again that event seems to have no power to make me feel like I'm "a writer." I begin to see in my mind's eye a series of experiences receding away from me like images on the Quaker Oats box. I should feel secure that I'm a writer now with this third book done, but I am not. It should have happened with my second, but it didn't. Even my first book should have done it: That's perhaps the most metamorphic experience of writing. The first time I ever published an article should have broken the ice and made me feel like a writer. But the ice re-freezes--it never stays broken. Earlier when I went back to graduate school and proved to myself that I could write after having felt incapable of it, that should have done it, but it didn't. Earlier still, back in junior high school, every fall, after a summer's job outdoors, I would experience again the feeling that I couldn't do this thing called writing. I almost felt I didn't know which hand to hold the pencil in. Not believing and re-learning and re-proving to yourself that you can do it--that should make you feel like a writer. Yet it doesn't stay proved. Probably the archetypal experience of this for all of us was the original time: When we were four or five or six years old, we were asked to write, but it was overwhelmingly obvious that writing was something that <u>other</u> people, <u>big</u> people, do--<u>we</u> do not write. We are not writers.

I conclude that if we are in the business of teaching people to write, one of the prime experiential facts that we have to deal with is that we are asking people to engage in an activity that feels to them as though it requires them to be a certain kind of person that they are not. Putting words on paper feels as though it involves some kind of magic transformation inside. In order to write, it feels as though we must get ourselves into a different relationship to pieces of paper and words and audiences, and most people feel they don't know how to make those inner transformations. A huge gulf has to be stepped over; we learn to step over it, but it doesn't stay stepped over. No matter what the age of the person or the level of expertise, I think people still have to keep wrestling with this kind of anxiety or sense that real writers do it in some other way.

My best success with students comes from treating them like writers. One way in which I have done this is by trying in my comments to students on their papers to reply to them as much as I comment on or assess or diagnose their writing. I think my reply treats them like writers and is at least as effective as my diagnostic commentary in helping them write better.

I treat students as writers by asking them to write to each other, not just to me. And recently I experimented with a kind of workshop that was new for me. I had seen painters set up studio workshops where the teacher and students could work together, so I decided to try something similar. Besides, I was jealous that those teachers were able to get some of their own work done while they were teaching. (It helps to treat oneself as a writer too.) I had a group of 15 or 20 students for a five-hour period once a week (as part of a full-time interdisciplinary program). These students were interested in working on their writing and they were already fairly skilled. I decided we should write from nine in the morning to noon, and I thought we would exchange feedback in small groups for the two hours after lunch. But the

first week--just to get acquainted and comfortable--I had us just read to each other after lunch what we'd written in the morning. No feedback. It turned out that first week, and then the second one too, that we were having such a good time writing together and then just sharing with everyone what we'd written that we continued this procedure for the rest of the quarter. It seemed more important to hear what everyone had written than to give feedback.

So for the whole quarter, no teaching or instruction occurred. But people's writing developed strikingly--as much, it seemed to me, as when I gave lots of feedback or instruction. In particular, I noticed that students who were successful in one kind of writing tried other kinds where they were nervous and unskilled. I don't think they would have been so likely to do this if they had been getting evaluative feedback. In that sense, I was treating them like writers. And I think that treatment made a difference.

And I think my best luck in working with teachers has come from treating them, too, like writers: getting them to write and share what they write with an audience. That is anxiety-raising for many teachers. Enormous numbers of teachers are scared about writing. After all, we have all been trained to be extremely good critics and editors and that puts a burden on our writing process. (I think that one of the main impediments to student progress in writing is this usually unstated deep anxiety about writing on the part of many teachers.) But when I ask them to write and they do it, something happens. It is not as easy for teachers as it is for students, but when they begin to overcome anxiety, they try new things and find new writing strategies--and new teaching strategies.

I sometimes think that teachers who <u>like</u> to write and who actually <u>do</u> write, somehow, by that fact alone, do more than anything else to help their students write better. That is, they are, by their

example and by what they manage just to get into the air, helping students make that mysterious inner adjustment that is required before they can begin to perceive themselves as persons who write--an inner adjustment of self-image without which so much writing instruction is of no long-term benefit.

* * * * *

As I sat and listened today to people in the forefront of the burgeoning writing movement, I thought about myself and where I am in my own stage of development. I want to share some analogies that come to mind between where I see myself now and where I sense the movement to be.

Is this an early or a late stage in the movement? One of my thoughts is that despite a certain sense of newness, of things "starting up" or "gathering momentum" that I hear implied, and despite the youth of the people in this group, it is certainly not an early stage. In 1966, after having re-entered graduate school, I got through my first year and felt a great sense of satisfaction. (I had dropped out five years earlier feeling utterly incompetent.) So as a present to myself, I gave myself the summer to study cognitive psychology. I thought I would be able to find evidence in cognitive psychology that an interdisciplinary approach to teaching, even in college--something I was excited about after teaching two years at Franconia College--was better than any other approach. And I felt that if I could say what I had to say "in cognitive psychology," everyone would have to believe me.

I read as much as I could that summer, and there were a lot of references to the new math and physics curricula that had recently been developed. Gradually I was hit by a great sadness: All those glitteringly smart and creative (and magnificently funded) people; it seemed as though all the interesting work had been done; everything about learning had been figured out; there was nothing important left to do. About a year

later I finally realized, as I began to reflect more consciously on my own troubles with writing, that there was still a little room for enlightenment in this area of writing. Not many people were talking about writing, or at least about what was troubling me--the writing process.

A few years later (1971-2), when I wrote Writing Without Teachers, I didn't have a sense of it's being early in any movement. I was too busy just operating in the dark, observing my own writing process. I didn't have a sense of pioneering.

My thought here is that despite the sense of newness and excitement we share, it will be useful for all of us to reflect on those experiences and activities and concerns that stretch out behind each of us and that brought each of us to this moment. Think about the things you did that may not have looked like investigations into writing. Looking backwards, you will see that's what they were.

The last five years have been some kind of middle stage for me. I have been writing a book, Writing With Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process. I hear a lot of product/process talk going on here, and I think about how I, too, have been wrestling with that dilemma. And I realize that the way many of us are wrestling with it shows that we are at a kind of middle stage of evolution.

Obviously I was obsessed with process when I wrote Writing Without Teachers, telling teachers not to worry about the product--it is the process that counts. I still think that is true, in a sense. But once you start saying that, you get into trouble: You get perceived as someone who has no standards, who doesn't care about quality writing, who is just fooling around.

I took for granted what is indeed true--that I am interested in the product--but I gradually realized I had to convince both my colleagues and my students

that I am. Colleagues and students are likely to get the idea that I am only interested in the process--and a messy process at that. So in my teaching I have to do some initial activity that involves editing and getting a clean, finished product before I can gain a little trust and get people to let go of their concern about correctness as they write. (I have noted the talk at this conference, too, about students wanting grades and about the constraints of real-world writing--writing on the job where the product counts.) So I have been trying in this new book to take my obsession with process and make sure it yields a better product. I think you can take initial "fooling around" and make it into a clean final product that is going to satisfy the criteria of a teacher or of a job situation. For example, I have been trying to show how to make experiential writing result in better expository writing.

In a way, Writing Without Teachers said, "Make a mess on paper; let your process be a mess." But in my new book, I try to say that the process, at least, needn't be a mess--that there can be a coherent shape to the process. Having written that, it is scary to be here listening to you people who are doing the research. Will I turn out to have told lies when I made up these things from my own experience? In addition, it is scary because I may now turn into the bad guy. When I present a slightly unbloodied picture of the writing process and tell my audience that the writing process can be coherent--most of all that it can be controlled!--I am, in effect, being somewhat prescriptive. Have I done justice to the mystery or the mess of it? That prescriptiveness is, in a way, what I started out fighting in 1971.

So there is a kind of loss of innocence here--a sort of pragmatism. And I sense a loss of innocence in this group here tonight too, and in the movement as a whole. Writing has become fashionable--it is no longer "we happy few" who are doing it out of love; people are doing it for money. The hard sciences are also interested, and, of course, that must be bad.

Instead of being iconoclastic and shouting that the establishment is all wrong, I sense in myself and in most of you a desire to work with the mainstream. In spite of the fact that we want to talk about process being more important than product, we want to be understood not just by people who have a temperamental affinity with what we are after; we want to be understood by those who don't have that affinity at all.

So there is a need to make compromises in order to be understood by people who will run away if we talk in the frames of reference and metaphors that are most comfortable to us. There is a sense of pragmatism because we want it to "work." I want to be understood by people who would be put off by Writing Without Teachers. There is some kind of turning point that involves trying to connect with a broader audience. So I see in myself and in the movement a loss of innocence and a sense of pragmatism.

If it is true, then, that the movement is at a mid-stage transition of some sort--some kind of "coming of age"--it would probably be well to reflect on what follows from that fact. What advice should we give ourselves now to help us move most productively through this transition? What dangers ought we guard against? But I leave such advice to others and move on to a final train of thought.

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Let me conclude with what is, I suppose, a call for research. It relates to this business--and I hear it implicit and explicit in much of the conversation these few days--of the possible conflict between focusing your attention on the writing process and focusing it on the product. I want to stress what I believe is a paradox here: that progress in a person's writing process sometimes results in a poor product in the short run. And the short run may sometimes stretch out. As one example, one of you reported earlier today on how the quality of students'

writing went way down (as measured holistically) when they were trying to learn how to structure their essays more tightly.

I wonder if too much emphasis on the product and on trying to improve it doesn't sometimes actually prevent a person from making a needed change and development in the process. Students whose products NEVER get worse may be students who don't take risks by trying to incorporate a major piece of growth into their process. Bruner says that when you move from one stage of cognitive development to another, performance is likely to degenerate because you are using a new set of cognitive processes. You are much more skilled with the old ones than with the new ones. But you need these new processes if you are to go very far.

When we try too hard to get students to make each paper better than the last one, we may preclude the possibility of their making major long-range improvement. So I have become interested in badness in writing. In trying to think about and defend this hunch that writing must sometimes be terrible, I have come to realize there are two very different senses of the term "good writing" as it is likely to be used in schools and colleges. There's writing that satisfies the assignment well and lacks mistakes. But there's also writing that someone would actually read by choice. Readers would not freely read most of the student writing we call good. We wouldn't read it unless paid. Can we really accept it, then, as "good writing"? Once you adopt the higher goal--writing that you might actually read without pay--it somehow becomes automatically obvious that the road is going to be strewn with some very bad stuff, and that this bad stuff is appropriate and necessary.

One particular instance of this paradox concerns an aspect of good writing that is close to my heart: "voice." I want to distinguish between "voice" and what I call "real voice." Writing with voice has liveliness, sound, energy, and rhythm: the sound of

someone in it. But when writing is really powerful--at least in one way--it has a quality of resonance and authenticity. That is what I call real voice. My hypothesis is that real voice comes from some kind of right relationship between writers and themselves.

As I become more sensitive to real voice, I am beginning to sense when it starts to happen, or even when (I think) it is trying to emerge. Where this happens, however (that is, in passages where the students begin to connect with themselves), the writing is often poorer. Starting to connect more deeply with oneself sometimes brings lack of control. I'm not just talking about personal writing, but also about writing where the students finally begin to write about some academic or intellectual topic in such a way as to bring to bear their convictions and deeply felt concerns. Of course, after the students have fully connected with a topic and fully achieved real voice, their writing is strong; but when they are just starting to allow themselves to work out and express convictions about a topic, they are likely to lose control over their syntax and structure. If they want to ensure smooth syntax and control over structure, they had better play it safe, remain unconnected, and write with unfelt ready-to-hand sentiments and phrases. Might it not be the case for many students that every time they start to write seriously--to try to say things that are important to them about the assigned topic--they get criticized (except on the rare occasions where they can pull it off completely) because their product is, indeed, by most standards, poorer than usual? Are not these students being rewarded for steering away from powerful writing and punished for steering toward real voice?

Anyway, I like these passages of incipient real voice because they are non-fake and because I hear in them the seeds of writing I might actually want to read by choice. So even though the writing might not be well controlled, I want to reward and encourage

students to continue down the path that I feel implied in these passages that jump out of me.

I would be interested in seeing or being involved in research to investigate the tricky issues involved here. What is real voice? Is it more than some idiosyncratic response on my part? Is it a quality that other readers could come to recognize? Could a group of readers agree independently on when it is present or not in a particular passage or piece of writing? Is it true that writers often produce poorer writing as they begin to develop real voice? Are there any correlations between the development of real voice in writing and the development of aspects of good writing?

If I am right about voice in particular or about the general phenomenon that growth and development in the writing process often result in temporary degeneration of the product, then we need research that helps us see the whole business more clearly.

I think that if we are <u>really</u> interested in the product, that is, if we are interested in helping students produce writing that readers might actually want to read by choice, we must commit ourselves to longer time periods of growth and development in the writing process. If we are after big stakes, we have to stop trying to insist on progress by the month or the semester. When we get a terrible spate of self-indulgent, uncontrolled writing that goes on for a month or even a semester, we must be willing to try perceiving it as possibly a sign of progress: movement from one way of writing--one way of creating meaning out of words or of getting experience into words--to another and more powerful way of writing. I think that many serious writers understand the importance of a commitment to a longer and more erratic process of growth in writing. I think that the failure of schools to measure progress in longer time periods, and more particularly to sanction poorer products in the short run, helps explain the mass of uninteresting writing that students produce in school.

But I'm just saying all that. I sense it is true. I believe that many of you might go at least some way toward agreeing with me. But if we want to convince others and affect the teaching process, we will probably have to show in a more disciplined way that we are right. I can't just say, "Oh, don't worry about the fact that the student's writing is worse; I can feel that it's on its way toward getting even better," unless I can point to research that backs me up. We have to be able to point to sequences of writing by the same person over time, sequences that suggest convincingly that poorer performances often function as gateways the student must pass through in order to move from, say, adequate writing to strong writing--or even from poor writing to adequate writing. We must show the application to writing of the general phenomenon of degeneration of specific performances as a person moves to a higher cognitive stage.

I'll end with that call for research. I am happy to be here, to hear so much about writing programs and research, and to have a chance to speak to you. I look forward to staying in touch and hearing more.

SESSION IV
THE WRITING TEACHER

THE LOS MEDANOS COLLEGE LITERACY MODEL

Sandra Booher
Los Medanos College

Because of their open-admissions policies, many California community colleges face the problem of trying to present collegiate-level work to students who cannot read or write well enough to profit fully from the instruction. Without a rigid tracking system, retention of students is often pitted against maintenance of standards. The problem is how to raise students' literacy levels to the point where they can handle truly collegiate work without involving lengthy, isolating, often dead-end remediation programs.

Los Medanos is among those institutions attempting to find a viable solution to this problem. The college has an innovative and demanding general education program, as well as exit requirements in reading, composition, and mathematics; but there are no entrance tests or academic tracks. Therefore, every instructor is faced with a mixed bag of reading and writing levels in the classroom. Yet attempts to recommend a reading/writing lab to students with poor skills have not been successful.

To solve the problem, the college is implementing a program for the training and use of peer tutors to upgrade language skills among underprepared students. This peer-tutoring program at is based on two basic concepts (outlined a few years ago by Charles Cooper): (1) Skills are effectively improved within the context of the student's own writing; (2) composing can be learned if the student doesn't have to learn everything at once.

Procedures

Peer tutors, selected by content-area instructors and trained by the language-arts faculty, are shown

how to implement these generalizations in their work with fellow students. The tutor-training class includes instruction in such matters as the following:

1. why students can't read, and how to get students to preview their reading and determine difficult vocabulary;

2. how to hold writing conferences that focus on both strengths and weaknesses;

3. how to help students clarify their own assignments;

4. how to model different strategies;

5. how to determine different learning styles.

Since the Los Medanos student body is comprised of learners from a variety of social, cultural, and educational backgrounds, tutors are also given instruction in meeting the needs of various special populations.

Upon completing their training, tutors return to their content areas to work with students who share their interest in a particular field, but who need help in meeting the reading and writing requirements in that area.

Observations

Since the program has only been in effect for one year, no firm data on the relative success of the project are yet available. However, the subjective responses of those involved either directly or indirectly--tutors, tutees, and content-area instructors--indicate that the peer tutoring program has been of genuine value to all concerned.

Future Work

Feedback from tutors during the first year of the project indicated that some content-area instructors were not providing adequate supervision for the tutors and others tended to give assignments that conflicted with instruction that the tutors had received in their training. It was felt that these problems could be remedied and the overall effectiveness of the program could be enhanced if the content-area instructors underwent a training program similar to that provided for the peer tutors. A proposal to this effect was submitted and approved. Weekly seminars are now being provided for ten instructors. The content of the seminars includes instruction on how students can learn to read and write better and how instructors can make the most efficient use of peer tutors.

While it is hoped that all 60 members of the Los Medanos faculty can eventually receive this training, the initial thrust of the extended program focuses on those instructors who are teaching Societal Issues, a required course for all degree candidates. Since students in this course must write an original and extensive paper, it seems to be the most logical and useful place to begin.

A second area that the project is moving into is special literacy instruction for underprepared vocational students. At the request of instructors from various vocational-training fields, diagnostic tests are being developed to identify students who can profit from special instruction. Peer tutors will be trained to assist students in upgrading the language skills unique to the vocational fields.

THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE SUMMER INSTITUTE IN TRAINING PEER TUTORS

Kenneth A. Bruffee
Brooklyn College, CUNY

Recently many colleges and universities have added peer tutoring to their undergraduate writing programs because they have discovered that it can personalize education in the face of increased teacher-student ratios and institutional expansion. Peer tutoring in writing also helps students overcome writing anxiety because it acknowledges that writing is an inherently social activity and it integrates learning to write into a social or collaborative context. Such programs can have a tendency to exploit the tutors, however, by making use of their services but not returning enough to them in academic terms. The Brooklyn College tutor-training program was devised to enhance the postsecondary liberal education of tutors in these programs by (1) improving their writing and judgmental skills and (2) helping them become more self-aware members of an educational community, a community of knowledgeable peers.

Both the philosophy and the curriculum of the Summer Institute are based on the principles of collaborative learning. Collaborative learning assumes that most knowledge is acquired in a social context. While some elemental forms of learning may occur in isolation (e.g., certain motor skills), all propositional knowledge--experience turned into language--is learned socially; language is the medium of social exchange. In the past, it has been assumed that writing and learning to write are highly individualistic, non-social events; the Institute proposes that they are essentially social.

Of course, traditional teaching does not entirely neglect this social element. It recognizes the relationship between students and teacher, but it assumes that the individual mind acquires knowledge on its

own, more or less in isolation. It does not recognize the importance of the other relationship necessary to mature thought and learning--a productive relationship among the students themselves. The provision of this latter element makes the Brooklyn College Writing Center unique.

Procedures

Brooklyn College is training both college and university teachers to apply this model in their own tutor-training programs. The program began in 1980, with fifteen postsecondary teachers from various parts of the country attending the five-week Summer Institute in Training Peer Tutors. Fifteen more will attend the 1981 session. Once back at his or her parent institution, each Institute graduate will train up to forty peer tutors each year. Graduates are also encouraged to affect, through local internship workshops, the way peer tutors are taught at neighboring colleges and universities.

The intensive curriculum of the Institute requires each Fellow to participate in two mandatory seminars. In one, participants engage in the same process of collaborative learning that characterizes Brooklyn's own tutor-training program: They write essays and peer-critiques of each other's writing, and examine the critical and social processes involved in developing judgment in writing. In the other seminar, participants learn some of the principles and practices of small-group work, such as handling the conflict of authority and intimacy in working groups, mediating differences, making demands, and guiding people in groups through the "phases of work."

Observations

The first group of Institute Fellows found the experience enlightening and challenging. In addition to acquiring new techniques and, in some cases,

experiencing marked growth as writers, many Institute Fellows found themselves asking some very basic questions about the nature of teaching and learning. The logs that participants kept throughout the summer indicate that a general effect of the Institute was to challenge assumptions (many heretofore unrecognized) about the social structure of classroom teaching and about the social and collaborative (as opposed to individual) nature of writing. At the highest level of generality, the Institute raised questions, as one Fellow put it, about "the context of learning and the social determinants of knowledge."

The collaborative learning model has worked for Brooklyn, and the Center's staff is convinced that it can work elsewhere. The grant makes it possible for Brooklyn to share its experience and expertise, and for colleges and universities from around the nation to apply the model to their own unique situations.

THE QUEENS ENGLISH PROJECT

Betsy B. Kaufman
Queens College, CUNY

Queens College has been actively committed to bridging the gap between high school and college writing needs for the past several years. As early as 1973, Queens provided underprepared, entering freshmen with intensive summer coursework in composition. Two years ago, the college began to develop and implement a three-year articulated curriculum in reading and writing that begins in the eleventh grade and continues through two semesters of freshman English.

Design

Several elements that were crucial to the success of the program were present from the beginning. These included (1) a firmly established, cooperative relationship between the Queens English staff and personnel from the five participating high schools, (2) Queens' prior experience with reading and writing labs, team-teaching, and tutor-training seminars, and (3) a commitment to a set of guiding principles. The principles underlying the program were the following:

1. Writers should have authority over their own writing.

2. Prolific writing is the best means of gaining fluency in writing.

3. Writing students must learn the differences between abstract and concrete and between observation and inference.

4. Students should write whole structures (e.g., essays) rather than parts.

5. Students should learn to rewrite rather than simply edit.

The first semester was spent planning the project and meeting for weekly reading and writing seminars with the eighteen participating high school teachers, their chairpersons, and the five graduate fellows who would be supervising the high school labs. During this period, course content and methods of implementing the curriculum were determined. In these meetings, the participants worked together to formulate plans for the first group of high school seniors. Seminars were held for the 32 undergraduate tutors who would be staffing the high school labs. The tutors went through the same learning process that they would be expecting their tutees to undergo: They wrote and read aloud what they had written, attending to the process they went through and to their ways of talking about what they had done. Tutors also invested some seminar time in learning to respond usefully to each other's writing. Members of the seminar aimed at becoming their own models of what can be done in a class of less experienced writers and readers.

The program moved into the high schools in the second semester, with 250 seniors participating. During the same semester, the Queens English staff worked with the teachers of both junior and senior classes to refine the articulated curriculum, and added 16 new teachers for training in the program. During the third and fourth semesters, 2300 students were involved in the program. At this time, the College staff consulted with high school principals, district superintendents, the New York City High School Division, and many representatives of the Chancellor of the Board of Education and the Chancellor of City University of New York.

Observations

All participating students were administered pre- and post-tests in both reading and writing. While final results have not yet been compiled, an evaluation of the first group of 250 seniors indicates that, on the basis of an essay scored by a holistic method, there was no significant improvement in their writing on this particular test. Some English chairpeople report, however, that students in the program scored significantly higher on the New York State Regents Examination than did their counterparts who were not in the program. Additionally, there was a significant improvement in reading scores.

Although writing scores on the holistic assessment did not improve significantly during the brief period covered by the initial evaluation, there is substantial evidence that the students' attitudes toward writing changed during the semester. Responses to a questionnaire indicated that students were writing more, were enjoying writing more, had increased awareness of the difference between observation and inference, and were more aware of ways of responding to other people's writing.

Future Work

Although funding for the project has ended, four out of the five high schools have insisted on continuing the project, and two new schools have been included in the continuation. District funds will be used to pay for tutors from Queens College. The College has released two instructors from some of their classroom duties for the purpose of training teachers and tutors and for coordinating the program.

SESSION V
LANGUAGE VARIATION AND WRITING

THE ROLE OF LITERACY IN THE NON-SCHOOL AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS OF LOWER-CLASS CHILDREN

Alonzo Anderson
University of California, San Diego

The purpose of this study is to provide a detailed description of lower-class children's experiences with literacy. The information obtained from the study will give school personnel additional insight into the ways in which low-income and minority children interact with reading and writing in their daily lives. This insight should be helpful in devising literacy instruction for such children.

Procedures

In the first year of the study, 12 children have been studied: six two-and-a-half year olds and six three-and-a-half year olds. Four of the children are Black, four are Chicano (Mexican-American), and four are Anglo. The yearly income in each of the 12 families is less than $10,000. Both parents are present in all families. No parent has more than 12 years of schooling; the average amount of education is nine years.

The primary source of data on children's literacy experiences is natural observation: A researcher spends approximately four hours a week observing each child in his/her daily routine. The observations are intended to be as unobtrusive as possible; thus, the researcher watches the child at home and in the community. So far, 1100 hours of observations have been completed, and much information has been collected on the children, their families, and the literacy events to which they are exposed.

Another data source is daily audiotaped diaries in which the mothers of the children describe all instances where their children are involved in reading or writing. Besides providing data on the children's

behavior, these diaries also indicate what the mothers perceive literacy to be.

The third data source is a set of structured interviews designed to externalize the children's changing conceptions of literacy. In one interview situation, the children are given paper and asked to take notes while they are being read to so that they can repeat back what they have heard. The other interview task requires the children to identify specific words in a printed sentence that has just been read to them.

Findings

The 1100 hours of recorded observations include only 56 hours (about 5%) during which any literacy event took place in the children's environments--when either the children or others (siblings, parents, etc.) did any reading or writing task. Twenty of these hours involve some kind of writing event; 36 involve some kind of reading event. Data have been collected on the time and frequency of each kind of literacy event.

Most of the children are generally not yet able to perform the interview tasks. This result can be expected, but the children's perception of literacy should change through the rest of the study.

Several preliminary observations can be made at this time. The most basic observation is that the presence of reading and writing materials causes children to be exposed to more literacy events. When books and writing materials are available in the children's environment, they are apt to deal with them. Thus, in good weather children are exposed to few literacy events because they are outdoors playing, and books and writing materials are not likely to be outdoors. (However, if such materials are outdoors, children will interact with them.) Rainy days are

excellent times for literacy events because children must be inside where literacy materials are.

In this low-income group of children, economics is also an important factor in the frequency of literacy events because a family that has little money will have few literacy materials available. When income increases, the presence of books and writing materials also increases.

Among the 12 children being observed, those whose families are more active in church affairs have the most exposure to literacy because printed Sunday school lessons are read and studied during the week.

Although the participating parents state that they think that reading and writing are important, they do not always behave in ways that demonstrate this concern about literacy. However, these parents themselves had few experiences with literacy when they were children; thus, their early socialization plays a role in their current child-rearing practices.

Future Work

For the second year of the project, an additional 12 children of similar ages and backgrounds will be added to the sample, and the study of all 24 children will continue during the third year. At the end of this period, the data will provide a detailed description of the role that literacy plays in the lives of these low-income families. Such a description will aid understanding of the contexts of and values associated with literacy in low-income families and the children's developing conceptions of reading and writing. This information should be useful for planning literacy instruction, especially for children from minority communities.

Also beginning in the second year of the project, another phase is being implemented: A similar study of school-age children will be conducted for a

two-year period. The objective of this phase is to develop descriptions of the literacy environments of both the school and the home/community for 30 kindergarten and 30 second-grade children from low-income Black, Chicano, and Anglo families. Again, natural observations in both settings will be used extensively, and interviews will be conducted. A main focus will be on the degree of match/mismatch between the contexts of and values associated with literacy in the home/community and those in the school.

THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION-SKILLS TRAINING ON HIGH-RISK STUDENTS

Stanford P. Gwin
University of Southern Mississippi

Colleges and universities are increasingly enrolling disadvantaged students who are not normally thought of as "college material." These high-risk students do not usually do well in college. One reason for their difficulties appears to be ineptitude with the necessary Standard English language of the classroom and the textbook. Project Access at the University of Southern Mississippi is a pilot program to measure the effects of a concentrated period of linguistic and communication-skill development at the beginning of college.

Procedures

The study includes experimental and control groups drawn from entering freshmen whose scores on the American College Test are in the lower fifteen percent. Both groups are balanced by race and sex to match the typical state-wide freshman population.

The extensive one-year program is taught by faculty from Speech Communication, English, Theater Arts, and Reading. Students receive instruction in speaking, writing, Standard English voice and diction, reading, and oral interpretation of literature (where the primary emphasis is on the practice of Standard English patterns in speech).

Growth in writing is measured in two ways. Syntactic maturity is measured by counting words per T-unit. Difference in writing quality is measured by a forced-choice comparison: Three readers (senior English faculty not associated with the project) are given pairs of compositions (pretest/posttest for the same student, or experimental/control matched pairs)

and asked to decide which one is better. The pairs are randomized as to order and group in the pairings.

Observations

While complete results await graduation of the first class in the project, all of the experimental subjects are still in school, have better grades than the control students, and write, speak, and read better than the control students. They have also experienced great growth in personal confidence and in grade expectation.

The project results so far have also generated a number of assertions, some of which are summarized below.

Writing is a surrogate for speaking; if students are taught speaking, they will learn to compose. However, speaking does not develop the ability to use the rules that make communication in written form possible. Therefore, the first obligation of instruction is to teach the rules of using language in commonly accepted forms so that students can communicate.

The rules of writing and reading are different from those of speaking and listening. In particular, culture-bound rule variations are more acceptable for speaking and listening than for writing and reading. Students whose oral skills originate in non-standard environments lack confidence and assurance in self-expression in any setting other than those in which the oral skills originated. To develop confidence, students must perceive themselves as rule-competent. When students acquire confidence in their present speaking and writing ability and/or in their future potential, teachers can direct very rapid improvement.

Instructor evaluation is more strongly correlated with instructor expectation than with the actual

writing performance of students. These instructor expectations are more controlled by oral and behavioral cues than by the writing that students do. In fact, comparative quality (pretest/posttest) of student writing does not correlate with teacher grading in writing classes. However, students can achieve good grades in writing classes when they have been taught non-verbal techniques for influencing teacher expectations.

The multi-course, interdisciplinary nature of the project seems to account for much of its success. Speech classes--rather than writing classes--are more effective in teaching organization of material and the use of evidence and argument. Project instructors correlate the work in speaking and writing, and encourage cross-fertilization. Under these conditions, students improve twice as much in both subjects as they do in either subject alone. An especially interesting (and highly statistically significant) finding is that improvement in oral interpretation of literature is highly correlated with improvement in writing.

The project has also had notable instructional results. Classes using sentence-combining activities were better in writing than those using traditional write-and-be-graded methods. But the best classes were those that included sentence-combining and freewriting in a structured, confidence-building, free-association environment. Finally, the use of student groups for editing, correcting, and coaching was better than individual or teacher work at these tasks in maintaining higher levels of student confidence in writing.

Future Work

As the work proceeds, it becomes clearer that the academic prospects of high-risk students are greatly

improved by strong training in speech communication in conjunction with the rest of communication-skills training, organized into the first year of college.

LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Ernest Lara
Arizona State University

This project has the following purposes:

1. to study the literacy demands of transfer, occupational, and developmental courses and of college administrative tasks (such as registration) in relation to the literacy skills of minority and other students;

2. to study the information and support services provided to students and the usefulness of such information and services;

3. to study the administrative tasks encountered by students, faculty, and staff that may infringe on student entry, persistence, and achievement.

The plan of work includes collecting and recording behavioral data, then organizing and analyzing these data to consider and test hypotheses related to specific problems. Project reseachers go into the community-college setting and find out what the important research questions are; thus, hypotheses are the end-products of the study rather than the starting points.

Procedures

The multidisciplinary research team includes specialists in organizational analysis, reading, curriculum, instruction, anthropology, educational psychology, bilingual education, adult basic education, writing, linguistics, and counseling.

The reseachers are investigating the literacy requirements for three components of the community college: administration, student services, and instruction. The strategies for the study include primary use of ethnographic techniques, extensive study of the socio-cultural environment as viewed from the perspective of administrators, faculty, and students, and avoidance of any attempt at imposing a priori categories on the data. Data are collected through the use of participant observers, non-participant observers, interviews, and discrete quantitative analysis of documents, instructional materials, and task requirements.

In the study of the administrative system, the primary question being asked is about how information filters down through various levels to reach staff and students. Administration activities are being studied at both the campus and the district level.

Three questions are being investigated in the study of student services:

1. What student services are specifically designed to meet student demands?

2. What student services are designed to help students cope with life events that might interfere with educational goals?

3. What impact do student services have on students obtaining these goals?

The investigation of instruction covers developmental, transfer, and occupational courses. In studying courses, researchers identify the course objectives and the instructional methods used by instructors to attain these objectives. The primary question then raised is what demands these objectives and methods place on students.

Extensive data collection and analysis are currently underway. The data should be useful to

community colleges in the identification of points where intervention may be most appropriate for students who experience difficulty with literacy demands. In addition, the methodologies employed in the project should be useful in expanding research efforts in community colleges.

A COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM FOR DISADVANTAGED COLLEGE WRITERS

Christina J. Murphy
Mississippi Industrial College

The goal of this project is to develop a model competency-based curriculum for rural disadvantaged college students at Mississippi Industrial College. The students involved in this project, although coming from a rich oral tradition, are from poor families (with an average yearly income of less than $4000) and from poor educational backgrounds (with average reading and writing abilities around the fourth-grade level). The development of a model curriculum for such disadvantaged and underprepared learners is a complex process; the structuring of a competency-based program in writing and other language skills is an essential component of this program.

Background

Experience indicates that conventional approaches to instruction do not succeed with the students served by this project. Time and exposure--via number of coursework hours accumulated--do not necessarily ensure competency in a given subject matter or in the development of academic and intellectual skills. Emphasis on coursework hours is often of minimal value to underprepared or disadvantaged learners who generally have experienced years of traditional education based upon time and exposure alone. Difficulties are also immediately apparent in pursuing an approach to writing instruction that is based largely upon imitation of examples of superior writing styles. Students with poor reading and writing skills have difficulty in comprehending and imitating the models of prose writing they are given. Moreover, limited skills in vocabulary and spelling contribute to the complex problems that students have with this approach.

An additional aspect of conventional instruction--drill and repetition--often fails with disadvanged learners who have spent years of schooling being drilled in grammar and who have yet to master or even, at times, comprehend the basis of grammatical structures. Another conventional approach that has not worked is the memorization of rules of grammar. Not only is this approach cumbersome, but often the memorization of hundreds of grammar rules--plus all the exceptions to those rules--is also overwhelming to the disadvantaged learner.

Procedures

Instead of using traditional approaches, this project endorses the view that students can be assisted in achieving requisite language abilities by means of defined and recognizable competencies deemed appropriate and meaningful to a college education. In the competency-based curriculum, the emphasis is on the ability to perform. Students are redefined as achievers rather than as detached observers, and a great deal of the responsibility for a meaningful education is placed on the students themselves. In defining a curriculum that would best serve the needs of underprepared and disadvantaged students, the project carefully considered the role of language arts and the writing process in the students' development. Because of the nature of the problems faced in helping disadvantaged learners develop effective language skills, the project has established a different approach to the teaching of the writing process, one that emphasizes instruction in logic and analytical thinking as requisite abilities to clear and effective writing, and one that emphasizes language construction rather than the memorization of grammatical rules.

This project focuses on the function of language by requiring students to construct a language in order to see it as a system for describing reality. Students rebuild their language from scratch, starting by creating names for things. Then these names are

categorized so that students see the necessity for certain grammatical structures as reflections of the world they find around them. Finally, students develop their own way of writing the language they have constructed. In translating these basic perceptions of reality from the spoken word to the written word, they are encouraged to see the need to establish language as a notational system, with markers that indicate number, tense, possessive case, etc.

In addition to constructing a language system, students transcribe the speech of their teachers and of each other. They are also given conventional exercises in writing essays.

The project has resulted in great growth and interest in language. The total approach makes the writing process more accessible to students by enabling them to understand the basis of language structure and usage. This fundamental insight translates into a renewed desire to learn the language and how to use it effectively.

SOCIOLINGUISTICS OF LITERACY: AN HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY

Leroy Ortiz
University of New Mexico

Although lack of literacy skills is not confined to any one segment of the American population, it is particularly acute among members of linguistic minority groups. A sizable body of research indicates that minority children, who are socially, culturally, and linguistically different from the general society, are failing to achieve standards of literacy that presumably lead to economic advancement and effective participation in civic responsibility. Major resources have been mobilized in many attempts to improve the level of literacy among these marginal groups. However, people are now starting to realize that solutions to the problem depend not just on enthusiasm and money, but on a clearer understanding of the complexity of literacy as well.

Procedures

In order to understand literacy better, the project will develop, on the basis of historical and comparative studies, a socio-linguistic model of the functions of literacy in various societies. The model will be tested in field observations of selected cases. The studies and observations will be guided by the following questions:

1. Under what circumstances do certain groups of people accept literacy in the vernacular? What conditions prompt groups to move towards literacy in the standard language? What tensions arise in each of these decisions?

2. Was literacy in either the vernacular or the standard generated from the group or

was it introduced from the outside? With what consequences?

3. What are the functions of language in the community? Who writes, who reads, about what topics, in what settings? Which language is used? If more than one, are the languages differentiated by function?

These questions will be investigated in a series of studies--both historical and contemporary--that will look at literacy both in the community and in the schools. Six language communities will be investigated:

1. Cherokee--where a syllabary, developed in the nineteenth century by the chief Sequoya, led to widespread literacy among speakers of the language;

2. Medieval Jewish communities in Europe--where Yiddish was spoken (but not written) and Hebrew was written (but not spoken);

3. Navajo--where literacy is primarily in English, not in the vernacular;

4. Spanish in northern New Mexico--where Spanish has been used for over 400 years and where there is a long history of Spanish literacy;

5. Guarani in Paraguay--where literacy in the vernacular co-exists with literacy in Spanish;

6. Tonga (or some other Polynesian language)--where there is a long history of vernacular literacy.

These groups have been chosen on the basis of two main criteria: (1) familiarity with and ease of access to the specific cases, and (2) the a priori likelihood that they will include a number of the major factors believed to be relevant in the model. (Additional cases may be included in the historical/comparative part of the study as it continues.)

Field observations will be conducted in two stages. In the first stage, observations will be made to develop a general picture, in terms of a sociolinguistic-domains model, of the non-school related functions of literacy within the selected community. In the second stage, schools will be observed in order to see if there is congruence between their view of literacy and that which is found in the community.

Implications

The conclusions drawn from the contrast and comparison of findings in each study will serve as a guide for teachers and for planners of literacy programs in the development of such programs at international, national, and local levels. A sociolinguistic model of literacy drawn from observations in various settings will serve as a theoretical framework for the creation of opportunities for functional uses of literacy.

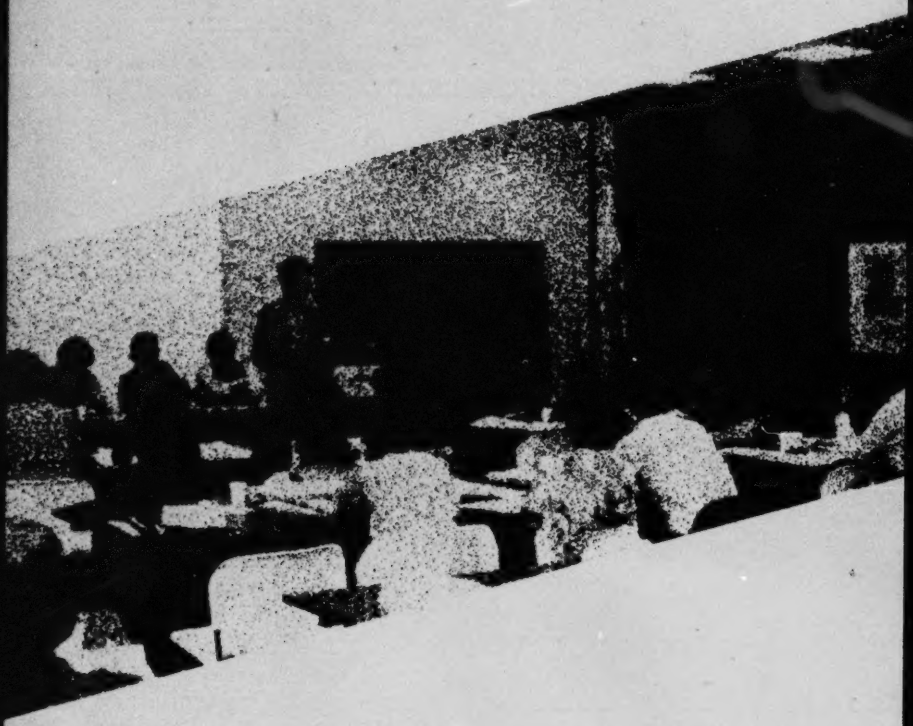
The findings from this study will be of special value to those involved in bilingual programs in the United States and elsewhere, particulary in cases when these programs attempt to promote literacy in the vernacular before literacy in the standard language.

The fundamental importance of the project for the education of poor and minority populations lies in the fact that the teaching of reading and the development of literacy will be most successful when the relevant socio-linguistic issues are recognized.

The study's implications for implementation will also be analyzed. Findings about the sociolinguistics of literacy may not be directly translatable into policy decisions or classroom practice, but the knowledge obtained promises to be significant to both. A deeper comprehension of the socio-linguistics of literacy will help educators make better decisions about language-education policy. It will help to understand whether a community is likely to be better served, other things being equal, by an approach of complete bi-literate education, or of initial literacy in the vernacular, or of teaching literacy along with teaching the standard language. Similarly, the model of literacy in a community need not be translated directly into classroom practices, but a fuller picture of community literacy should help teachers understand better what will seem like meaningful uses for reading and writing for their students.

SESSION VI

FUNCTIONS OF WRITING OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL



DEVELOPING NEW MODELS OF THE COMP-LAB COURSE

Mary Epes
York College, CUNY

From 1977 to 1979, York College/CUNY developed the COMP-LAB basic writing course. The course integrated instruction in rhetoric and complex syntax, provided by a teacher in a traditional classroom, with instruction in word-level grammar and elementary syntax (i.e., in the forms and structures of the written language), provided in an autotutorial laboratory. Students worked by themselves in the laboratory, using materials written by the project directors. The techniques adapted for these materials had proven successful in English-as-a-second language and foreign-language instruction.

Procedures

The design of the COMP-LAB course was based on two major theoretical distinctions that differentiate it from most other basic writing courses. The first distinction made by the course designers was between composing and encoding. Composing is defined as the process of finding something to say and then finding ideas and details to support that point; it is the process of putting meaning into language. This is an exploratory and judgmental procedure during which a writer can benefit from interaction with a teacher and other students. Composing can therefore take place better in a classroom than in a laboratory.

Encoding is the process of representing meaning in written symbols. This process involves learning the grammatical and syntactic conventions of a language and then training oneself to apply them consistently. This is a technical matter requiring individual practice, so a laboratory offers an ideal setting. Furthermore, because the composing and encoding processes are so different, they can be

learned more effectively when they are taught by different instructional methods.

The second major distinction is between two different types of basic writing students. Students in the first group, the "traditional" remedial students, are speakers of standard English dialect, and their writing problems are usually associated with inadequate content, manifested by an inability to move between levels of generality and supporting specifics. This problem may or may not be accompanied by errors that arise from unfamiliarity with the print code.

Students in the second group, the "nontraditional" or "new" remedial students, are not speakers of standard English. The writing problems of these students can usually be traced to an imperfect acquisition of the standard grammar and syntax of the language. Even if these students are mature thinkers with well-developed cognitive skills, their inability to deal with the forms and structures of written English seriously impedes their writing.

These two types of students are usually treated as if there were no differences between them. The philosophy of the COMP-LAB course, however, is that the traditional remedial students and the new remedial students are distinct in significant ways that call for distinctively different pedagogies. And so the COMP-LAB course was developed to meet the needs of the second group in an innovative and effective way.

Results

A careful evaluation of the COMP-LAB course was conducted at York College and at the other two colleges to which it had been transferred. In an error-count analysis, students who received the experimental treatment made significant improvement on all six variables measured. A control group, receiving traditional classroom-based instruction, made improvement on only three of the six. On a holistic measure

of overall writing quality, the experimental students improved their scores significantly, while the control students did not. Teachers who used the COMP-LAB methods also found that their students responded very positively to the course.

Subsequent Work

Because of the success of the college course, the project designers have extended the program to several non-college settings. A model of the COMP-LAB course has been developed to improve on-the-job writing skills for employees of the Bronx Psychiatric Center. The course has also been adapted to be used with innercity high school students, labor-union members, CETA trainees, and adult-education students. During the second year of the program, these additional models of the COMP-LAB course will be evaluated, and they then may be instituted on a permanent basis.

Implications for Instruction

During the course of the two projects, the directors have developed some tentative hypotheses that have important implications for instruction, especially for adult learners. The following hypotheses seem to be confirmed by the work completed so far:

1. Written language acquisition, like learning to read, is basically a self-instructional process. The teacher plays a crucial but relatively small role in this process; the burden of learning is essentially on the student.

2. If appropriately designed, intensive grammar instruction directed toward correcting error in writing does <u>not</u> impede fluency and rhetorical development and <u>can</u> facilitate them greatly.

3. Increasing the fluency of writing does not in itself increase students' control over the features of standard written English. Extensive practice can, indeed, increase control, but only if it is focused practice.

4. Although poor readers are almost always poor writers, improvement in reading does not necessarily lead to improvement in writing, and may even impede writing improvement, particularly for speakers of nonstandard English.

5. Psycholinguistic insights into the reading process can cast strong light on the writing process, but only if theorists realize that the reading process, as described by psycholinguists, is very different from writing--in fact, it is the reverse. Those who fail to perceive the differences between these processes sometimes draw erroneous conclusions about writing skills from reading research.

6. Not all features of nonstandard speech are equally resistant to writing instruction and to exposure to the print code. Long after the influence of rhetorical and phonological features of nonstandard speech has disappeared, aspects of nonstandard syntax persist in writing.

These hypotheses, if proved valid, will demand some radical revisions in the most widely accepted approaches to basic writing instruction, especially for speakers of nonstandard English.

NATURALISTIC STUDIES OF NONACADEMIC WRITING

Dixie Goswami
American Institutes for Research

Most research in composition has been done in academic settings, where the writing task is assigned by a teacher or a researcher in order to achieve an instructional goal or provide data for a research project. However, researchers also need to examine writing that has a purpose beyond improving writing skill or generating data. More specifically, research in composition should include an examination of writing done outside of schools, especially the writing that people do as part of their daily work.

Working adults do a great deal of non-published writing, yet relatively little is known about the nature and functions of this writing. There is limited information about the variety of tasks that non-professional writers must perform, and even less information about the stylistic choices that these writers make. This lapse seems rather serious since information about such tasks and choices might well influence the teaching of composition. This information gap, then, provided the rationale for the current project, a three-year study of writing done in nonacademic settings.

Procedures

This project focuses on writing done in three separate settings: a social service agency, a large southeastern labor union, and the laboratories of several scientists. Since there is no well-defined theoretical apparatus for describing writing activities in these contexts, the project designers have drawn upon insights provided by speech ethnographers. Procedures include on-site observations of workers in a variety of settings, collection of writing samples produced during the course of daily work, and extensive interviews with writers. These interviews are

designed to answer some of the following research questions:

1. To what extent are nonacademic writers sensitive to rhetorical choices, such as their relation to their audience?

2. What reasons do writers give for justifying choices about style and substance, assuming that researchers can identify points at which such choices have been made?

3. Do writers' reasons reflect a sensitivity to their audience, or do their reasons suggest that they are following some pedagogical proscriptions, without any regard to the rhetorical context in which these choices appear?

4. Are writers likely to vary syntax or other linguistic features of their writing when they address different audiences or try to accomplish different purposes?

5. Do writers' judgments about acceptable style vary according to the type of writing they're evaluating?

6. Do writers in different positions within an institution differ in the types of reasons they give for justifying their rhetorical choices? Do they differ in their sense of what is acceptable style?

Procedures

Project staff do not claim that their observations and interviews actually reflect the inner psychological processes of writers. However, their investigations do shed some light on the complex, sophisticated responses that writers make to various

rhetorical demands. With this limitation in mind, project researchers can offer some preliminary results:

1. There appear to be some similarities between nonacademic writing and school-sponsored writing. In both cases, writers may seek the approval of a person (a supervisor or a teacher) who may not be the ostensible audience for the writing, but whose good opinion is important to the writer. Both nonacademic writing and school-sponsored writing may be intended for a specific audience and purpose. However, it is extremely unlikely that school-sponsored writing will actually reach its intended audience. Thus the consequences and contexts of nonacademic writing are sufficiently different from most school-sponsored writing to justify careful handling and examination.

2. It is very unusual for a writer to justify a rhetorical choice by citing an a-rhetorical proscription. At the beginning of the investigation, researchers had expected that many writers would offer a-rhetorical, formulaic justifications for their choices, such as "never use the pronoun I." However, the actual results of the study indicate that writers do indeed have very complex, rich sensitivities to their audiences--sensitivities that interplay with their perceptions of purpose and subject.

3. Many writers are capable of producing comprehensible, verbal versions of text rather than the passive, nominalized versions that are often associated with bureaucratic writing. However, when

researchers rewrote these verbal texts in the bureaucratic style and asked the writers to choose the more acceptable version, writers consistently chose the passive, nominalized style.

4. Writing plays an important role in establishing and maintaining the social setting of a writing community. Writers are extremely sensitive to variations in the way they address others, in the way they refer to themselves, and in the way they refer to their clients.

Implications for Teaching and for Future Research

The designers of this research project are very cautious about suggesting that this study has immediate implications for education. The central purpose of the research is not to improve instruction, but to understand writing practices that occur outside of schools. Even so, some pedagogical implications may be inferred from the data.

First, writers on the job seem to display a sophisticated sensitivity to audience, purpose, and subject. Indeed, work-site writing competence even requires that writers have these sensitivities. Yet traditional composition instruction in schools emphasizes rules, formats, and genres at the expense of other rhetorical considerations. Further investigations into how writers on the job acquire these sensitivities may provide some insights into how writing instruction ought to be designed.

Second, if writers on the job draw upon their awareness of audience and purpose as strategies for composing text, what happens in school-sponsored writing when the full rhetorical context is not present? This research suggests that removing audience and purpose from the composing situation may have profound effects on the way writers write, on the text they produce, and on their perceptions of that text.

Once research begins to describe what happens when writers write in the "real" world, then perhaps educators can begin to understand what is actually being manipulated in school-sponsored writing.

THE POLICE MANAGEMENT WRITING PROJECT

Arthur S. Pfeffer
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

In any major metropolitan police department, effective use of language is a primary concern. Police officers relate to the public through language, and the success of their work depends upon skillful manipulation of spoken and written words. In the City of New York, the Police Commissioner has expressed concern about what the public may regard as stereotyped police language. A special lexicon of formulas characterizes much police writing, and over-reliance on this lexicon, along with other practices, may impede understanding of written communications.

From the filing of simple arrest forms (whose narrative sections present surprising challenges to a writer's skills) to the composing of sophisticated research reports, writing is one of the major support activities of the New York City Police Department. Civilian personnel, detectives, sergeants, lieutenants, and captains all spend a great deal of their time writing, yet it is evident that major writing problems exist. These problems involve the skills of the individual writer, the regulations and expectations that govern writing training and practice, and the circumstances under which the writer works.

The Police Management Writing Project is designed to address these issues. The project aims to increase the effectiveness of internal and public communications by developing new materials and courses to be incorporated into police academy curricula in New York and elsewhere. The first year of the project was devoted to assessing problems, needs, and resources through various techniques, beginning with collecting and analyzing hundreds of samples of various types of documents. From this analysis, the project staff will develop appropriate training materials.

Procedures

A set of questionnaires was used to elicit general data on the experience, education, and duties of police writers. Additional statistical data were compiled, indicating the ranks of personnel who write precinct documents and describing superior officers' opinions of writing deficiencies. In addition, project staff conducted interviews that produced vital information on how police writing is done and elicited candid opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of written communication within the department.

Tests were also administered to determine the comprehensibility and readability of police directives. The Writing Project maintains that all police personnel should be able to understand department communications, and that an artificially complex style based on the Penal Code and other legal writing is counter-productive. Therefore, the results of these tests should enable staff to determine whether some categories of police documents need to be revised according to the principles of "Plain English." When the analysis is complete, it will reveal whether standard readability formulas can be applied to police documents as indices of actual comprehensibility. The answer to this question has great procedural significance in the process of establishing minimum entrance requirements for the reading skills of police recruits. The comprehensibility pilot-test data alone were suggestive. They imply that the "bureaucratic" style of much police writing is poorly comprehended by civilian and police readers, that simplified rewrites are more comprehensible (especially for non-native speakers of English), and that only experienced police officers can sometimes "read through" some of the obscurities to guess correctly at the intended meaning.

The precinct writing-allocation survey, in combination with the opinion survey, revealed that civilian clerical aides are asked to write a significant portion of precinct documents and that commanding

officers believe the aides' writing is deficient. The project is therefore arranging an experimental program to adapt the Comp-Lab autotutorial workbook used at York College/CUNY (with specially designed writing exercises) to improve the basic skills of clerical aides.

The instruments also confirmed the comment heard many times in the interviews that it is at the rank of sergeant that an officer first encounters extensive writing duties (unless he or she is working as a detective, in which case writing is heavy from the start). This type of information is essential if the project is to advise the NYPD on methods of selecting its personnel for writing instruction.

In another effort, the project has collected special writing samples from all 600 members of the department's newest recruit class. These samples are being evaluated and will be compared with future samples obtained from the class when it completes its five-month training period. The purpose of the comparison is to assess the effect of academy instruction on recruits' writing. If a significant number of recruits (all of whom have passed a civil service examination) are shown to be writing on a level inadequate to cope with job demands, a modified version of the Comp-Lab method could be incorporated into the curriculum. The project will advise the NYPD on the appropriateness of a writing test for job entry.

Preliminary Outcomes

Because the Police Management Writing Project is designed to provide practical pedagogical and operational assistance to the department, compiling "pure" research data is not the primary goal. The results of the Project's various studies are manifested in the development of new writing policies and instructional materials and methods. For example, most academy instruction is carried out in lecture fashion, and the

project is recommending that the writing classes be conducted in a more interactive manner, with substantial hands-on practice and simulation of the actual conditions of on-the-job writing.

The following courses are among the first to emerge from the Project:

1. a course in Executive Writing for captains and inspectors (this course will put to work what staff have learned about the system, contexts, and problems of writing in the NYPD and could result in significant future change in writing policies and training; the course will help furnish commanders with the verbal tools to articulate standards for effective writing by their subordinates);

2. a self-paced pilot course in basic skills for civilian clerical aides (see above);

3. an experimental undergraduate course in Police and Management Writing;

4. a proposed course in the writing of directives;

5. a proposed course in basic management writing for sergeants and lieutenants, who now receive no such instruction;

6. a workshop in the composition of investigative reports as the written element in a complex language transaction involving listening (interviewing), writing, and speaking (testifying in court).

In addition, the project has completed videotaped interviews with a number of police officials on the subject of writing in law enforcement. The purpose of these interviews, which are supplemented by scenes and analysis of police writing activities, is to create an informational film explaining the importance of writing skills to those who are planning law-enforcement careers. The film, dramatizing what can go wrong when writing is faulty, is intended to be used in police-academy classes and in college criminal-justice classes. An alternate version of the film will be shown in the executive writing course, and a third version is planned as an instructional aid.

THE DOCUMENT DESIGN PROJECT

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The Document Design Project was established with the primary goal of making forms, regulations, brochures, and other written materials easier for people to read, to understand, and to use. The staff of the Project includes specialists from a variety of fields: psychologists, linguists, English professors, graphic designers, writers, editors, lawyers, and experts in instructional technology. All of these specialists bring their expertise to bear on the problems of document design by investigating the difficulties that readers have with documents as they are now written, by understanding how writers compose these documents in the actual contexts of their jobs, and by assessing interventions designed to improve writers' understanding of their readers' needs.

Procedures

The Document Design Project combines research, technical assistance, and curriculum development in one project. The goal of the research component is to develop a set of valid and reliable guidelines that document designers can use. As part of its research component, the Project has conducted studies to identify problem documents, analyze those documents, and determine the nature and extent of specific problems, to observe how people deal with difficult documents, and in particular to work in an Hispanic community to find out more about how non-English speakers cope with documents. The project has built up a set of research-based assertions about good document design and is studying how writers use those assertions and how people behave with documents that have been revised on the basis of the assertions.

The technical assistance component of the Project involves working with government agencies as they

compose or revise documents. In two years, the project has conducted 31 technical assistance and training projects in 17 different agencies, including the Internal Revenue Service, the Social Security Administration, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The technical assistance component is particularly valuable in that it provides a working laboratory for applying the results of other research. In addition, each technical assistance project becomes a kind of research project in itself--a case study of the process of composing or revising.

Much of the Project's technical assistance work involves seminars for government writers and their supervisors. An important outgrowth of this work has been the development of an instructional model of the document-design process. The process model includes pre-design steps, such as defining the audience and purpose for the document, and design steps, such as selecting the appropriate organization and format for the presentation of content. Post-design procedures include revising, editing, and evaluating the document to insure that it achieves its desired purpose for its intended audience. This model is a valuable practical tool for making writers aware of aspects of composing and revising that they had not previously considered.

The Project's curriculum development work began with a survey of innovative approaches to teaching writing to undergraduates. That survey showed a widely felt need for an undergraduate course that would prepare professionals in the humanities and social sciences for the type of writing they do on the job. The Document Design Project is therefore writing a textbook for an advanced undergraduate course. The course is based on the same process model as the Project uses in its technical assistance work. In addition, the Document Design Project has established an interdisciplinary graduate program in document-design research. This graduate program is now in place at Carnegie-Mellon University.

Observations

Research and technical assistance projects of the Document Design Project have suggested several observations, which may be of interest to writing teachers.

In the world outside of academia, people don't very often get to choose the topic of their writing. Most writers on the job write by assignment. Thus the typical school exercise to "write on whatever you want" is not a task that is likely to be encountered in the "real" world.

Much of the writing that takes place in government agencies is actually revision, not of one's own work, but of an already existing document. When this occurs, writers usually attend only to surface features of the document, such as vocabulary or syntax. Seldom do writers attend to rhetorical considerations, such as the message that is being conveyed to the audience, or to other pragmatics of the document's design, such as format.

Most bureaucratic writers, whether they are composing or revising, do not write with their real audience in mind. Writing in an institution involves two audiences, an internal audience, consisting of supervisors or editors within the institution, and an external audience, consisting of consumers for whom the document is actually intended. The Project has found that government writers seem to be much more concerned with their internal reviewers than with their external audiences.

Most bureaucratic writers do not use strategies that match the strategies of readers as they try to understand documents. The Document Design Project's research has shown that document readers look for a "scenario," that is, a description of actors performing actions, preferably with examples that fit the description. Bureaucratic writers, however, simply write facts.

Questions for Future Investigation

The work that the Document Design Project has done leads to questions that have important implications for how writing is taught. Some of them are the following:

1. How do government writers acquire the bureaucratic style? Are they actually taught to write this way, or do they simply adopt this style because they have never been taught to deal with the rhetorical considerations of audience and purpose?

2. How accurate are writers' perceptions of what their internal reviewers expect? And, as these reviewers change their perceptions of what is acceptable style, how will this affect the writers' work? Will writers be able to satisfy the expectations of their internal audience, yet still be able to meet the needs of their external audience?

3. What are the long-range effects of the Document Design Project's training? Will government writers continue to use the process model of document design even when Project staff are no longer there to assist them?

4. Can the process model of document design be adapted to the composition classroom? Can the model be useful for English teachers who come from a literature background, but who must make the transition from teaching literature to teaching composition?

In addition to considering these topics, the Document Design Project continues to do research on problems

people have with public documents and the effects of specific revisions on how people understand and use documents.

CONCLUSION

CLOSING REMARKS

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In order to summarize the presentations of these sessions, I am going to note the recurring themes--at least those that were clear to me. I am also going to note some general uneasinesses that seemed to recur as well: There were issues about which we didn't feel too good. Then I'll conclude with some personal comments. I am not trying to force consensus, but rather make a report from the field as I saw it.

Recurring Themes

One recurring theme was that the writing process is not linear. As Flower, Perl, and others pointed out, writing is recursive--we go back and forth and back and forth. There was also an interest in pregnant pauses during the writing process. We tend to think of writing as an event that occurs over a discrete amount of time in the school or work setting. But my own writing (and, I suspect, your writing) goes on sometimes for months. There are papers that won't write themselves, that sit there and look at me and eventually say, "Write me," and I do and eventually they get finished. So the pause sometimes lasts for two weeks and sometimes six weeks or more.

The second recurring theme was that writers know more than they use. Flower, Harste, Perl, and others pointed out that concept. And it has implications for testing. It's a great challenge to us that when people write, they call on only a fraction of what they know. This represents a positive attitude about people--that they know a lot more than we think they do or they themselves can demonstrate.

The third recurring theme was that the study of writing should focus on strategies. Perl said that even unskilled writers have strategies. This

parallels what we've been doing in the study of oral language functions. Everybody has certain language functions, such as requesting, denying, and so forth. These functions seem to be universal, and yet different strategies exist for realizing them.

The five-year-old girl who lived across the street from me a few years ago got me involved in research on functional language when she knocked on my door one evening and said, "Mr. Shuy, if you look across the street, you'll see our car is gone."

"Sure enough, Joanna, your car is gone," I replied.

She said, "You know, Mr. Shuy, my mother worries if I miss meals."

I responded, "Joanna, would you like to come in the house for a while?"

Then she went on to say, "You know, Mr. Shuy, I eat almost anything."

That is an indirect speech act--getting invited to dinner without ever making a direct statement such as "Please give me something to eat." She made three statements about how the world works and got herself invited to dinner. And we went on a rampage in a three-year research project studying oral functional language. The range of writing strategies stressed at this meeting is one of the recurring themes that I feel is very important.

The fourth recurring theme was that writing is goal-directed, as Flower noted. Redish's project has the specific goal of clear writing; people in Goswami's project have specific purposes in mind when they write. We don't just randomly write; good writers clearly have goals in mind.

The fifth recurring theme--that writing has context--was perhaps one of the most exciting ones to

me as a sociolinguist because sociolinguistics just takes linguistics and puts context around it. That is what we have been doing for a number of years now--looking for that context. Harste called it a semiotic event. Ortiz stressed the fact that some groups move to literacy more readily than others. Goswami felt strongly that writing has a context and that writing is a social activity. Meaning and language growth are context specific. Bartlett, in fact, said that it's not possible to separate conventions from language. Rentel's example of the many meanings of and, depending on context, is illustrative. Both Bartlett and Rentel talked about shared context, anaphoric and exaphoric (either in the text or out of the text). The shared references that people have sometimes do not get made clear to the reader. Certainly this is true of a test-taking situation as well.

The sixth recurring theme was that research should form a teacher-researcher bond of some sort. The Bay Area Writing Project is one model of such a bond. We hear more and more researchers talking about using the teacher as a researcher to work in the classroom, rather than researchers just going in and raping the classroom and leaving and never going back again.

The seventh recurring theme was that writing is self-generated. Keech stressed this rather strongly: that writers should write about what they really need to write about. So much of the time the writing topic is given to us by somebody else. And even when the topic is "Write about whatever you want," the context of the school setting and its constraints are still there. Perhaps when we write about what we want and need to write about, we will have something remotely similar to the concept of self-generated writing.

The eighth recurring theme was the contrast between the expectations of the writer and those of the reader--or the contrast between the expectations of the test taker and those of the test maker.

Researchers like Keech and Redish talked on that topic. The expectations of the test taker and the test maker are often quite different, which is where we get into the matter of cultural bias.

The ninth recurring theme was that there is a need to disseminate these new ideas that are coming out of research in writing. Redish's project is a step in this direction. Kinneavy's user package for judging writing programs is an example of how we could be moving in this area. Perhaps we should do whatever we can even if it is imperfect; and do it better the next time, and better yet the next time, and even better the next time. This workshop is a major step in dissemination. At meetings like this we get the chance to share references, know who's doing what, and build networks. We can establish a network of people we keep in contact with, and we'll probably never be the same as a result.

The tenth recurring theme was that attitudes are very important both in the teaching of writing and in the writing itself. There was a call for attitude change, and the attitude to be changed seemed to be largely at the form level. We tend to see what is on the surface, but we need an attitude change to get below the surface. Deaux and Graham noted that an attitude change was needed to focus on teaching rather than evaluation. There was also a call for a change in the role of the English teacher--from the traditional adversary role to one of an ally of the student writer. Elbow stressed that we should treat the writer like a writer, which is a big attitude change. He said to talk back to the writer and encourage interaction.

The eleventh recurring theme was the need for time-depth studies. Anderson suggested that we needed more time depth in the things he was looking at. Staton's data showed this too, as did Gwin's study. Elbow called for more time for writers to develop their real voices. I think that this view leads to the notion of writing being developmental. We've

thought a lot about writing in the frame of an instant, but it seems pretty critical that we also see writing over time. We really don't have a good feel for this concept of development yet, and Kaufman's plea for knowledge of how development takes place is, I think, a clear call for new research. Until we have developmental theory and developmental research, we will not be able to measure writing effectiveness sequentially very well. We've heard several participants suggest that students' writing ability seems to fluctuate from year to year. There are reasons why that happens, and we ought to learn more about them.

These are my eleven recurring themes. We also had some recurring uneasinesses. I'll talk about them next.

Uneasinesses

One uneasiness was about the unit of analysis that we should use to measure writing. We expressed some concern about the T-unit. We were confused about--or at least uncomfortable with--some other concepts, like rhetorical maturity. New units of analysis were suggested. Rentel is using cohesion; Bartlett talked about referencing; Staton discussed topics. Herrington suggested that we need to assess process as well as product.

A second uneasiness was about scoring. We weren't sure about holistic scoring. Perl and Kinneavy questioned its usefulness. Deaux presented evidence that holistic scoring provides different results. Keech said that holistic scoring reveals, but it also obscures. Besides holistic scoring, we also mentioned analytical scoring, primary-traits scoring, and indirect analysis. But we didn't come to any conclusions about how they were useful.

Another uneasiness was about teaching. Applebee described the dismal state of writing in high schools.

We heard about students whose scores go up and down from grade to grade or drop from the beginning to the end of the year. Do students somehow go downhill, or do we measure the wrong things, or is our unit of analysis the wrong one? Yet Elbow said that mistake-making was natural in writing and probably a good thing as evidence of growth and of chance-taking. We have strong support for the notion that first language acquisition and foreign language learning don't take place without mistakes being made. So we should also expect that mistake-making is natural in written language learning. We have a belief in education that progress is consistent and upward, and if you violate this, something is wrong. We tend to believe that being wrong is a bad thing and that being right is a good thing. But that doesn't work too well whenever you deal with language, spoken or written.

The next uneasiness was about the way we have used data in the past. I think maybe the big battles in many disciplines are the battles over what constitutes good data. Several people suggested that we should let data drive the analysis. Goswami's, Pfeffer's, and Redish's projects go right into the real world. But we still have a kind of uneasiness about data, how to use it, where it comes from, what it amounts to. I see this also reflected in the concern about whether required compositions are natural and whether there are other ways of getting at writing.

Another uneasiness was about the presumed interactiveness of writing to people. Bruffee stressed the collaborative interaction. Rentel said that writing is different from oral communication. Gwin talked about the interactions of speech and writing. Staton said that writing can be interpersonal and called such writing the missing link in the development of writing. This recalls the work of Martin Joos, who talked about different styles of oral language: intimate, casual, and formal. He had an implied notion that you learn formal after you learn casual, and that intimate is probably first--a kind of a timeline from birth to

adulthood. You keep on being able to use intimate when you move to casual and later when you learn formal. But in writing, what we often do is have people write formal language without ever passing through casual or intimate written language. Intimate writing might consist of notes passed between students. The dialogue journal that Staton was talking about seems to be a kind of casual writing. Maybe there are other kinds of writing, but it is odd that we expect students to write formal essays without ever going through some developmental stages in writing that are somewhat equivalent to the developmental stages of speech.

An additional uneasiness was about stereotypes of writing, of teaching writing. Manning reported on the demands of students for grades. Deaux's report revealed some interesting stereotypes that non-English teachers have of English teachers, of writing, and of the teaching of writing. These are perhaps not unlike the stereotypes that students must have in the classroom. Booher's problems at the community-college level are relevant here. It seems pretty clear that further research in ethnographic and attitudinal studies is needed.

Another uneasiness was about research traditions. Writing is a kind of macro event that is difficult to see in a micro way. Kaufman and Bruffee stressed the importance of the larger social event in the writing process. There is an interdisciplinary nature to what we are doing, so I am glad there are a number of disciplines here. Writing is a verbalization of self that leads to a kind of vulnerability, so counseling is involved. Writing is a social event, which seems to place it in the sociologists' territory. Writing is thinking; that certainly makes it a cognitive event, so we have psychologists involved. Writing is language, so that justifies a couple of linguists around. And writing can be observed (as Lara stated), and that puts us in the territory of anthropology.

But isolating any one of these--counseling, sociological, psychological, linguistic, anthropological--phenomena from the others runs the serious risk of misinterpretation. I think this cross-fertilization of fields involved in writing is very important. We're having a very nice convergence of focus without necessarily agreeing on the terminology or the methods we're using. It's a healthy kind of thing.

Since writing is a macro event, it is difficult to use micro techniques on it without distorting the ecology of the whole event. I think researchers are now willing to be a great deal more vulnerable than they were a few years ago. As Flower put it, it's time to quit fooling around and put our theories out for criticism. Kinneavy and others brought out the contrast in research paradigms. What came through is that research isn't necessarily linear. The old model of theory going to research going to practice is no longer viable. Rather, the view presented here was more like the view presented of writing--a recursive, iterative model, with theory, research, and practice interacting. Not all research, Goswami said, has a known practice, but sometimes it's good just to cast out anyway and take a look at things just to find out how they work.

Another uneasiness was about the interdisciplinary approaches that are evident here. This can be a problem unless we all have a base discipline of some sort. True interdisciplinary work, it seems to me, occurs when you start with your own discipline and then reach out for others and figure out how they relate to your base discipline. It can be distressing to learn that people in other fields don't know our basic knowledge, and that's inevitable at a workshop like this. Wheels get reinvented, and we certainly do that all along. This meeting has displayed its share of wheel reinventing. Murphy highlighted this problem for us in her presentation. One of the things we've tried to do here is to disseminate across fields in such a way that we don't waste time rebuilding wheels that other fields have already got running.

The last uneasiness I'll mention was what to do about problems of form. At this meeting we've had conflicting perspectives from one end of the spectrum to the other. For example, Epes' project gives considerable emphasis to form, while other projects pay little attention to it. As a group, we aren't sure whether to emphasize or to ignore form. I, too, am torn about what to do.

Personal Comments

The composing process. The two language-output skills--writing and talking--are the focus of my comments about the composing process. It seems odd that we worry about the composing process of writing more than the composing process of conversation. Why is this? Partly because we tolerate false starts, mistakes, rambling, and lack of organization in oral conversation. We permit them, in fact, as a kind of necessary groping--thinking things out, thinking on our feet. We don't expect a finished product or a compact argument in speech, but in writing we do. Therefore, the process seems more important to analyze and define in writing. But why should such asymmetry take place? The answer is probably in the social structure of both the speaking and the writing events. Social proximity in conversation allows for, tolerates, and perhaps even expects interpersonal editing. It also provides immediate feedback, which writing generally does not.

The solution to this asymmetry between the composition of writing and the composition of conversation is important for studying the composing process as it actually happens. One solution is to study the process of how people go about writing, which allows no tolerance for false starts, mistakes, rambling, or lack of organization. Since writing represents a set of constraints on behavior that would not be tolerated in conversation, studies of the composing process are actually not of the composing process, but rather of

the special constraints imposed upon the composing process.

Our studies now are of the contextual variables rather than of all the dependent variables. This is a little bit like studying the process of walking under the constraints of a slippery sidewalk, a broken toe, and high-heeled shoes. We would not be studying the process of walking; we would be studying the process of specially impeded walking. Such a study reduces the importance of the results to that of the constraints and not of the process itself.

Assessment. The study of writing assessment has been plagued, as have most areas of academic assessment, by the tyranny of what is there. Our task is to measure what the writer is able to do, but several things militate against this. For one thing, almost all testing is notorious for measuring what people cannot do rather than what they can do. Moreover, when measuring writing ability, we tend to take as our baseline the things that schools ask writers to do. On the surface this seems quite reasonable, but a deeper look causes me some great concern. We have to ask ourselves whether or not what the schools ask children to write is an adequate baseline for measuring what they can actually write.

Is it possible, for example, that children are or could be better writers than the tasks required of them permit them to be? What sort of evidence would we need in order to determine whether or not this is the case? What would we do about the assessment of writing if we were to conclude that children can think, organize, sequence, explain, persuade, narrate, and describe a great deal more clearly than their writing reveals? Or that they can do these things better under some sorts of writing conditions than others? The answers seem quite clear. We would have to conclude that what we are assessing is not writers' ability to think, organize, sequence, explain, persuade, narrate, or describe, but rather their ability to do these things under the special set of

circumstances created for the writing assessment. We would have to conclude that our assessment is not an assessment of these abilities, but only an assessment of the ability to do a specific task. Picking up on our walking metaphor again, we would be assessing ability to walk on a slippery pavement with a broken toe and high-heeled shoes, but we would not necessarily be assessing the ability to walk. In other words, I think we are studying the conditions, not the ability. It's important for us to think about that.

Context. We hear a great deal about context these days. There was a time when researchers could get away with amputating a behavior or event from real life, placing it under the microscope, and watching the little amoebas swim around. And we believed that somehow by seeing a piece of a phenomenon very closely we could tell better how it worked.

Now this works very well for some scholarship. The physical sciences, from which we borrowed this approach, seem to find it quite helpful. But when the social sciences began to borrow it, they seemed to ignore the tremendous complexity of human and social context. For the study of people is unlike the study of geology or biology, where this reductionist approach is satisfactory. But we borrowed it anyway, and in education we played science rather dutifully and began breaking down behavior into little pieces. This approach is fast falling into disfavor, although the back-to-basics people are still enchanted by the idea, and they put considerable pressure on the schools to hold fast to the reductionist approach. The point is that reductionism tends to remove context from learning.

However, we need to determine what we mean by context. The first meaning has been amplified by several of the presentations at this workshop--the social context: Different cultures bring not only their sense of the meaning of writing, but also their individual forms and styles of presenting it. Since there is, as Heath so clearly pointed out, a relationship

between oral and written language, writers bring to writing the forms and styles of their spoken language. This poses an immediate problem for assessment since we need to differentiate the functions of writing--how it's used to get things done--from the forms of writing--how language is presented in the effort to carry out the writing function. Writers cannot be accused of not communicating when they describe, request, convince, apologize, promise, narrate, or clarify effectively without using the school norms of such writing; they have still done these things without the school norms. The function is there, not the form.

We throw out the baby with the bath water when we fail to assess these differences, and we elevate social effectiveness over functional effectiveness when we assess only form. The traditional response to such a realization has been to assign two grades--one for content, one for form. But the focus on form has so characterized almost all of education that it drives teachers, evaluators, and researchers to communicate to writers somehow that socially acceptable form really matters more than getting things done functionally. And we have made little progress toward understanding and using the functional model of writing. The purpose of much of the research on the social context of writing has been to clarify the dimensions of these form-function differences so that education can make better use of the knowledge to evaluate writing more carefully and to sequence the structure more realistically.

Just as there is no reason to believe that a language learner will master the forms in a new language in one day, there is no reason to believe that a writer will produce the grammatically expected sentences in a first writing assignment--or a second. Years of habit with language cannot be changed that easily. What's worse, the traditional school emphasis on form works powerfully to lead writers to put their attention on form to the exclusion of function--a process that easily leads to the production of

grammatically acceptable pablum. Alternatively, it leads to a hatred of writing.

The second meaning of context (besides the socio-cultural one) is the theoretical context. Bruffee noted a paradox: Writing is individual and social at the same time. Reseachers who study process tend to see the event in a more micro fashion in order to learn how an individual writer works. Researchers who study the context tend to see the macro aspects--the social context, the setting, the language, the culture, and so forth (as pointed out by Ortiz, Anderson, and others). Now, writing seems to be a macro event. How can we get at the component parts without falling into the reductionist trap that Bruffee warned us against?

Here context becomes a tricky word. The socio-cultural context and the theoretical context are different things to me. The theoretical context is the psychological-experimental approach (where one structures the experiment) versus the anthropological-observational approach (where one lets it happen, finds the experiment out of the data, as Ortiz pointed out). We have great difficulty in getting hold of the process of experimenting with writing partly because of the need to isolate, control the variables, or reduce the writing to viewable component parts; this is difficult for the experimenter. The observationist also has difficulties in getting hold of all the context elements, even to seeing them all at one time. The ethnographer has a terrible time managing to see everything that goes on, just as the experimenter has a terrible time trying to find the little pieces. The effective study of research in writing will need to clarify this matter of the theoretical context in which researchers work.

Both experimenters and observationists are at this meeting, but I think that there can be a unique group of people who are, at the same time, both experimenters and observationists. Somehow the different research traditions will need to continue to learn to

talk to each other clearly and effectively if they are going to make sense.

The presentations at this meeting clearly show research in writing to be at a critical stage of development. This is particularly fortunate because there is no clearly established and success-filled tradition to break away from. We are also blessed with a natural blend of disciplinary perspectives that keep researchers and practitioners in a perpetual state of needing to learn more. This can only be good.

Perhaps the most exciting conclusion from this meeting, however, is the growing sense of the dignity of writers. They are said to have more potential than we have tapped. They are reported to have strategies in oral language that are not tapped by the way we have taught writing thus far. There was much talk about attitudes, the need for self-generated writing, the value of interactive writing, the trend toward goal directedness. Old straight jackets of linearity and form-over-function surface analysis are being challenged. We hear more and more about the growth or development of writing ability over time. We hear pleas for new and more meaningful units of analysis, the desire to see writing in context and from a time-depth perspective. These are all signs of a healthy and promising movement in the field.

One last word is in order. The idea of bringing together research and practice in a meeting of this sort is a brilliant one. It would be difficult to believe that those who presented their research and programs to others who were groping with the same or similar problems could have anything but a beneficial effect on progress in the field. It was obvious that the participants not only learned about each other's problems and successes, but that they also extended their network of communication and help in the future. NIE and FIPSE are to be both thanked and congratulated for their brave effort.

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